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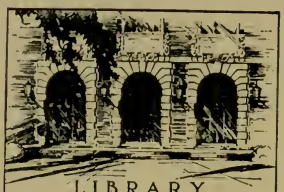

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MRS. CLEVELAND,

AND

THE ST. CLAIRS.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

MRS. CLEVELAND,

AND

THE ST. CLAIRS,

&c.

One of the amusements of idleness is reading without the fatigue of close attention, and the world, therefore, swarms with writers whose wish is not to be studied but to be read."

DR. JOHNSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.

1836.

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THE ST. CLAIRS.

(CONTINUED.)

THE ST. CLAIRS.

CHAPTER VI.

"HER ladyship is just going out," said the portly porter, filling up the whole entrance to Lord Conway's mansion, in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Orde, if Lady Conway was at home.

"But as she is not gone," returned the visiter, insinuating himself with difficulty into the hall by the above-mentioned porter, "I will just step up into the drawing-room."

In the drawing-room, and in the very act of advancing towards the door at which Mr. Orde entered, stood Lady Conway, with every outward sign of being prepared to go abroad. A king's ransom decked her not inconsiderable and cer-

tainly very lovely person, in the shape of costly sable Genoa velvet, Chantilly veil, bracelets, brooches, earrings, watch, plumes, &c.

"What new whim is this?" demanded Mr. Orde; "it is only one of the clock, and your carriage at the door! Are Willis's rooms on fire? or are the ministers out?"

"*No, but I am,*" said Lady Conway with emphasis, to mark her sense of the intrusion of a man who, though possessed of a pretty general *entrée* into most houses, yet in hers was on very uncertain ground,—an exception Mr. Orde in vain strove to remove.

"I understood as much from your porter. I only flew up to offer my arm to your carriage, if you will do me the honour of accepting my poor services."

Somewhat softened, Lady Conway put her arm into that of her visiter, and they descended the stairs together.

"You are right to get your drive early, as I think the day will change," observed Mr. Orde.

"I am going out early in order to find my sister."

"What! Mrs. St. Clair? Is she in town?"

"She arrived the day before yesterday."

"And where is she?"

"I forget—some enormous distance off. John my footman knows."

"And—and—is she in favour again?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you know very well my meaning."

"If you allude to my father and mother, I know nothing. I never enter into the St. Clair politics, private or public. If my father is angry with Ellen, I am sure it is no concern of mine; and if she has given him cause of offence, it is equally a matter in which I can have nothing to say."

"Very sensibly spoken. You are perfectly right, as you always are," answered the obsequious Mr. Orde.

Lady Conway vouchsafed no reply to this compliment, and mounting the step of her carriage as fast as her dignity would allow, bowed slightly to her visiter, and before his back was fairly turned, gave very distinct orders to her porter never to admit any one, upon any pretext, who was not upon her *private* visiting-list.

The horses flew, and notwithstanding the "im-

mense distance," a very short time brought the Countess of Conway's equipage to the door of a small, but respectable-looking house, in Gower Street, Bedford Square.

Ellen thought better of most people than they deserved, and positively disliked no one; it is not therefore to be supposed that she found herself folded to her sister's bosom with indifference. Tears of joy flew to her eyes, as again and again she kissed the handsome cheek presented to her.

"My dear Pamela, how delighted I am to see you!—how well you look!—do come near the fire!—How are you?—how are the dear children? Sit here, that 's a love; all the other chairs are as uncomfortable as the wooden stools of our old school-room in former days."

Excepting as regarded the chairs, which her ladyship protested her sister was unjust towards, Lady Conway repeated nearly word for word all that Ellen uttered. She almost squeezed a tear into her dark eye, as she expressed her enchantment at meeting her, her delight at her good looks, and inquired most tenderly after Edward's health, as well as that of his dog Flora.

Lady Conway was cold as the most frigid ice; she positively had *no* feeling, but she was not deficient in understanding; she had good sense, and might indeed be termed clever. From sound worldly principles, discernment, complete knowledge of society, and complete self-possession, she acted almost invariably right in the eyes of those whose standard of perfection is worldly-mindedness, or who, as in Ellen's case, have hearts more inclined to praise than blame; or of those, in another instance, who, not having sufficient capacity to penetrate beyond the surface, are decided by a fair exterior to imagine all is fair within. Such was Lady Conway: her object in visiting Ellen was to give her sister pleasure by the attention, and to satisfy the world of her sisterly affection when the attention should be proclaimed.

But the actual visit would be nothing unless she made herself agreeable also; so agreeable and so amiable, that Ellen should have no suspicion that her ladyship's thoughts were entirely filled by a fancy-dress charity-ball, which the heads of half-a-dozen ladies of fashion were then concocting; and that she was secretly determined, by paying a

handsome visit now, not to have again occasion to penetrate into the back settlements of London for some time.

It might be supposed that Ellen's private affairs would become the subject of conversation; but what one sister would not enter upon from delicacy, the other avoided from policy. Lady Conway hated scenes, complaints, and confidences, unless, as regarded a crowned head, a prime minister, or something very exquisite in society. The love affair of Edward and Ellen was to her of less interest than the ballad of Henry and Emma. She therefore kept strictly clear of that ground, and made herself singularly agreeable on every other; giving accounts of plays, balls, books, and music, and recounting a thousand lively details of their mutual acquaintance, or of people distinguished in society or in public life.

The two hours devoted to Ellen were over. Lady Conway arose with alacrity. "Adieu, my love!" she exclaimed. "Will you go to the opera to-morrow night?—it is Pasta. We dine at Ashford House; but I will send the carriage for you when it has taken us to dinner, and it can carry

you to the opera whenever you like ;—my love to Edward—adieu !"

The next moment Lady Conway was seated in the carriage, which, flying over the stones, soon conveyed her ladyship to the fanciful committee. Her friends all hailed her with delight, though with some slight reproaches at her tardiness. Her excuses were speedily made — " My poor little sister Ellen is in town—she has no carriage, and lives in the neighbourhood of Bedford Square. I have been the whole morning with her, poor soul ! for she can go nowhere, and sees nobody, living in such an out-of-the-way place, and can know nothing of what is going on in the world !"

" How very kind !" — " How amiable !" — " How like yourself !" resounded from all sides in reply.

Ellen was a passionate admirer of music, and of her who, by the soul-stirring powers of acting, joined to a voice of splendour, has rendered an opera the most enchanting entertainment that, since the birth of the histrionic art, was ever heard or witnessed. It was therefore with no small pleasure that she found herself comfortably established with Edward in her sister's

opera-box even before the drawing up of the curtain. *Semiramide* commenced, and proceeded for some time, to the unalloyed satisfaction of the delighted Ellen. Towards the end of the first act, however, a few glasses were levelled at Lady Conway's box, to discover who was there; which distant recognizance was, too soon for Ellen's peace, followed by a much more open acknowledgment of her presence; and, to her great annoyance, a whole bevy of beaux, in search of herself or her sister, entered the box. The splendid finale was rendered discordant, and Pasta's acting but half attended to, by the necessity of giving ear to such interesting discourse as—"How well Lady A—— looks to-night!—Lady Fontenoy's hat is perfection!—Who is behind the curtain in D——'s box?—What unfortunate man have the Knoxes got between them?—That will be a marriage, Dundas and Lady Clarinda.—The Scottish air agrees with you, Mrs. St. Clair.—Poor Marston is still in despair!—By the bye, Tom Foster is quite done: G—— wins five thousand pounds—there 's luck! he was worse than nothing a year ago."

To Ellen's great relief, Lady Conway arrived

before the conclusion of the opera, bringing with her a fresh train of lords, commons, and dandies, and driving from her premises, with a glance which the most hardened could not withstand, various persons who had presumed, upon the delegated authority of Ellen, to effect an entrance upon ground which they had never ventured upon before, and which Lady Conway resolved they never should appear on again, but where *once* to have been seen was satisfaction sufficient for the intruder's object.

Lady Conway, of course, now took the lead in conversation; and as hers was not at all a flirting manner, the discourse was general, every one joining either to echo her ladyship's words, or, if they had courage and wit, to support opinions of their own. Ellen was not called upon for either of these objects; so again bending her head towards the stage, she saw the curtain drop! A dull ballet ensued: the conversation around proved much more amusing; but the eagerness with which Ellen, to all appearance, attended to it, caused something very like a jealous pang to Edward, who, in an empty box opposite, waited with anxiety till the dropping of the curtain should enable him to claim his wife from the little crowd

of admirers who surrounded her. The curtain fell: Edward flew round to the other side of the house; but he was too late—his wife's arm was already fast locked in that of the Duke of Ashford. Like other husbands similarly situated, Edward had nothing left for it but to follow as he could; to catch half a joke from the duke, and see a whole smile as the reward, from his wife, and to wish the opera at the devil for bringing Ellen into contact again with persons and amusements, all taste of which the retirement of their lives, since their marriage, seemed to have entirely banished from her mind, and which the smallness of their income must preclude the possibility of their ever indulging but in a very lowly form, unless by the patronage of others; a system of dependance which Edward did not in the least fancy.

He might well have spared himself these reflections had he known the thoughts of Ellen, who, as they journeyed home to Gower Street, after putting Lady Conway down in Grosvenor Square, in answer to a question of her husband as to how she had been amused, answered, "Very much indeed; but I do not care to go to the

opera again ;—it will unhinge your studies—it will entail numerous visits and engagements, which will either lead into useless expense, or betray, unnecessarily, our poverty to people who would look upon an income four times the amount of ours as means hardly sufficient to exist upon ; so that we should only excite the contempt of the vulgar-minded, and, what is far worse, the pity of our friends. My wish therefore, on every account, is to remain at home, where I am certain of being contented and happy ; and I hope my dear Edward is of the same opinion." The answer of her husband need not be questioned, and the pair reached home in peace with themselves and all the world around.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the newly-married couple could live entirely to themselves and secluded from society ; nevertheless, the state of Ellen's health, the studies of Edward, their abode and income, made them decline the far greater number of invitations they received to join the brilliant society then existing in the gayer end of London ; added to which, Lord and Lady St. Clair were now established in their house in town, and, apparently satisfied with the pecuniary assist-

ance vouchsafed to their child, made no additional steps towards receiving her into favour. Nothing was further from Ellen's wishes than, under such circumstances, to meet her parents ; and the more they went into society, the greater would be their chance of so doing. Still they dined out frequently, and went occasionally to evening parties and the theatres. Lady St. Clair gave large dinner and evening parties, as the Morning Post regularly announced ; and Lady Conway regularly congratulated her sister upon being excluded from them, as well as the satisfaction she ought to experience in moving since her marriage in the society of Ashford House, so far superior to that of her mother.

Poor Ellen's feelings were little in unison with those of Lady Conway : willingly would she have given up all the gay parties at Ashford House to be again received as a child at Lady St. Clair's dull *soirées ;* to be again familiar with a house once termed home, and with faces which, having known them from childhood, possessed an interest in her tender, unforgetful heart.

It was fortunate for her, that the house she most frequented was one from which Lady St. Clair was excluded ; an exclusion, whether occasioned by

accident or design, her ladyship roused herself sufficiently to resent, by announcing her "at homes" for the precise evening his grace's parties took place. Such a proceeding ensured the humble attendance of every one of her family excepting Lady Conway and Ellen; the latter from not being invited, the first because she very rarely complimented her mother's parties by her presence, and in this instance pronounced it to be positively out of the question. Worldly as was the daughter, her mother was equally so; therefore no open rupture ever ensued between them. As the Countess of Conway was invariably right in the world's opinion, so Lady St. Clair, implicitly trusting to that tribunal, however she might feel her daughter's want of attention in this and many other instances, would rather have died than acknowledge her wrong.

The minions of the family were less scrupulous: in the spirit of toadyism towards their chief, and with a jealous hatred of independence in others, they took care to let their virtuous indignation be heard. At the head of these was Mrs. Willis. Since Ellen's marriage, however, Lady Conway's misdeeds had fallen very much into the

shade, and her more iniquitous sister's sins took precedence of those of every other St. Clair, living or dead, no matter the magnitude of their faults, or from whence proceeding.

"Disgraced as she is," said Mrs. Willis to *her* humble friend, "to think of Ellen going into society at all, and that people should invite her as they do now, is to me most extraordinary. She must have managed her matters well,—a sly chit! to get included in *every* party the duke gives, however select, whilst I have never set my foot in his house! and they do say, moreover, that the duke's sister, Lady Lucy Elden, has given her the command of her carriage morning and evening, and she goes to the play when she likes in his box."

"No good will come of that intimacy, take my word for it," muttered Miss Croak: "the duke is a gay man by all report—poor Mrs. St. Clair is as weak as her husband is thoughtless. Independent of the indelicacy of her appearing in public when unnoticed by any of her family, excepting Lady Conway, who cares for nobody, and Miss St. Clair, whom nobody cares for, their frequenting the society of people of fortune must lead

them into expense. It was but the other day I saw at Maradan's—actually at Maradan's !—a blue hat and feathers, the very fellow to the one Lady Fontenoy wore the other night at the opera. I had some thoughts of purchasing it myself, and was proceeding to try it on, when a pert girl sprang forward with a scream, as if I intended to steal the hat, and informed me it was sold. 'And to whom ?' I asked, somewhat offended with the manner of the girl. 'A cette jolie Madame St. Clair qui demeure dans la rue de Gower,' said the Frenchwoman. I was thunderstruck !" and Miss Croak raised her rose-coloured eyes towards the ceiling, in token of her astonishment at the destination of the blue hat and feathers.

Mrs. Willis, shaking her unmeaning head, said coolly, "Such extravagance must lead them to gaol. We all know what their means are ; and only last night Lady St. Clair said to me she had not an idea how they went on."

Contrary to Mrs. Willis, and her friend's opinions, the Duke of Ashford neither was Ellen's lover, nor likely to become so.

It was in his grace's public, not private capacity—not as *un homme à bonnes fortunes*, but as

the head of an exclusive society — that Ellen's favour took rise. The gain of so lovely and engaging a being entirely to his set was worth any attention, any trouble ; — for this generally benevolent object, not for his own individual benefit, therefore, were his devoirs paid ; and Edward, who well knew the duke's character, understood as much, and rather gave him credit for his good taste. Ellen, on the contrary, gave him only credit for his good nature. The seeds of kindness were never scattered in vain as regarded her, and the fruit which sprang spontaneously from her grateful heart had often been looked for in vain by the duke, on occasions when his generous kindness to others had been displayed in a much more efficient manner than, as in Ellen's instance, in a few dinners, a few operas, parties, and balls, and in his strong recommendation to his sister to patronise and be friends with the nicest little *new* thing in the world, who, unless they kept her to themselves, might, from her simplicity and good nature, fall into the hands of the *humdrums*, and be lost to *society* for ever. " But mind, Lucy," continued his grace, " she must not lose her unaffected manners ; and she is to

be *your* friend—or *my* friend, which is the same thing,—not given over into the grasping hands of any of our dandies for tuition ; for it would be unkind by Edward, who is an excellent fellow, and too lately married not to be susceptible of jealousy. On my arm or on yours she will be as safe as with him."

Lady Lucy was all attention, and promised obedience. The St. Clairs continued to frequent Ashford House, without thinking the less well of their own humble home ; nor did the pardonable vanity, which induced Edward to deck his Ellen's head with a hat of Maradan's manufacture, produce any worse consequence than satisfaction to the donor as well as wearer.

With Sir William and Lady Jane Crawford, the St. Clairs lived upon the most agreeable terms of friendship. Besides their house in town, which was always open to them, their abode in Hertfordshire was to them equally as a home, whenever Ellen's pale cheek seemed to denote the necessity of country air, or Edward wished to relax in his professional studies. Indeed, Lady Jane carried her interest so far in the gentle Ellen's fate, that at that trying period when Lady

St. Clair's anger, and Lady Conway's worldly affairs, prevented them from attending the young wife, she fulfilled all their duties, and received into her arms Ellen's lovely little girl.

If Edward and Ellen were happy before, their felicity now knew no bounds; — their poverty, their parents' ire, — all was forgotten in gazing on the darling babe. As soon as Ellen was well enough, she and her child accompanied the Crawfords into the country: it was her first separation from Edward, who had important business to call him elsewhere, as shall be detailed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

The next object to his wife, in Edward's thoughts and cares, was his profession. Previously to his marriage, he had not been idle; but, since that period, he had become decidedly studious: for the consciousness that another's welfare might increase with his exertions, and that not for himself alone were his toils required, now gave him an interest in that which had before been dull and wearisome; it quickened his perceptions, and produced a fixedness of purpose in his mind which must ultimately turn his application to account. A very few months placed him on a par with the most promising men of the day; but whether his having been called to the bar would give him the opportunity to proclaim his proficiency, and display a gift independent of art and study—that of eloquence—time alone could prove. In regarding

so many of his profession older than himself, and perhaps more highly gifted, still living on hopes of future glory, whilst the present hour stole by adding only to days and years of obscurity—why was he to expect better fortune? why flatter himself that he should be of the favoured few, whose brilliant and exalted destiny excites the emulation of the unfortunate many, toiling in poverty and neglect? "*Ich lebe der Hoffnung*," was however the consolatory motto of the St. Clairs. Edward, full of expectation of a glorious result, pursued his arduous studies: a cause once obtained, fortune and fame would ensue. His hopes were realized;—a cause he did obtain! But, however, for the better understanding that cause, its rise and its effects, it will be necessary to lay before the reader the brief history of Charles Mordaunt.

The next boy to Edward St. Clair at Eton School was a well-looking, amiable, and cheerful youth, by name Mordaunt. He and Edward were playfellows and friends,—a friendship which continued when their years for play were past. At the time that Edward commenced the dry study of the law, his friend entered the army;

and, on the Brighton downs and cliffs, capered and caprioled to such purpose on his lively charger, with his showy uniform, as, with that of the world in general, to attract the particular notice of Miss Arabella Scot, only daughter of Sir Jonas Scot, a pretty young lady with a fortune of fifty thousand pounds.

Miss Scot could never rest till she had formed Captain Mordaunt's acquaintance; nor let her father rest till he had invited him to tea, to dinner, to his house in the country, &c.: nor, as the truth must be told, would she let Captain Mordaunt rest till he had asked her to dance, to ride, and to—marry her.

Miss Scot was the spoiled child of an aged father. Her only brother, many years her senior, and by a different mother, was a man advanced in life, full of family pride, without a particle of family affection. He shook his head when the proposal was made known to him, and cast his eyes towards his father, as if to bespeak his interference. Sir Jonas Scot, however, had no intention of thwarting his child's wish. "If Bella likes the captain, she may marry him."

Bella professed most earnestly she did like him;

the captain was therefore summoned and accepted in due form, spite of the frowns, threats, and almost imprecations of Mr. Scot.

The lady's fortune was, as has been said, fifty thousand pounds; and her lover's depended solely on his father, a gentleman of good property, but large family, of whom Captain Mordaunt was the fourth from him upon whom was entailed the principal part of the family estate. Delighted with his son's marriage, and enchanted by his daughter-in-law's fifty thousand pounds, Mr. Mordaunt altered his will the very moment of his return from the marriage ceremony, bequeathing as a legacy to his dear son Charles a gold snuff-box, instead of the eight thousand pounds heretofore intended for him! This diminution in the bequest caused no disappointment to Captain Mordaunt when, six months after his becoming a husband, it was made known to him by his father's death. Revelling as he was then in far greater wealth than he had ever anticipated the enjoyment of, he was not only contented, but even delighted that his happy fortune should be accessory towards increasing that of his brothers and sisters. So he thought, and continued to think, till a nearer and

far dearer being was snatched from him, and a fact was then discovered of which Charles Mordaunt had married in perfect ignorance.

On his daughter's marriage, Sir Jonas Scot had resigned all the legal arrangements into the hands of his lawyer and his son. Under their worthy auspices, settlements were drawn up, which Captain Mordaunt and his affianced bride signed in due form, neither of them regarding the contents as of otherwise than nominal importance.

At the expiration of four very happy years, poor Mrs. Mordaunt died shortly after the birth of a son, and leaving her husband most sincerely afflicted at her loss. On the day following that which had consigned his wife to the tomb, Captain Mordaunt was aroused from his solitary and melancholy reflections by the entrance of his second brother, Richard, who, after some short discourse relative to the late unhappy event, ventured to ask if Mrs. Mordaunt had left any will.

"It was my dear wife's anxious wish to do so," replied Captain Mordaunt, "and I sent to her father's lawyer accordingly, — but received for answer, that by the marriage settlement all neces-

sity as well as power of making any testamentary bequest was precluded from my wife."

"And how was her property settled?" demanded Richard anxiously.

His brother professed his utter ignorance, as, the property being his wife's, he had left the whole management of the settlements to her family.

"I know nothing about such matters," he continued; "but I imagine I have a life interest, and at my death our poor little child will succeed, of course."

"That would be as it should be," said Richard thoughtfully, "and God grant so it may prove; but something fell from your brother-in-law this morning which I did not quite like: he spoke as if, as a trustee to your marriage settlements, he should become guardian to the property and person of your child, totally independent of the power of its father."

"*He* guardian to my child!" exclaimed Captain Mordaunt, the colour at once restored to his pallid cheeks. "Never whilst a drop of blood flows in my veins,—never! That sordid, selfish being, to have power over my dear child!—no! forbid it, Heaven!"

"We must see your settlements as soon as we can, to ascertain the real state of the matter."

"You may look this moment; a copy of the settlements is in that drawer; I have never looked at them, but there they lie."

The drawer was in an instant opened. A sealed packet appeared, which was hastily torn asunder, and the contents diligently perused by the two brothers.

Now, enigmatical as the language of the law is, even to its own disciples, (as if, for the sake of those who live on quibbles and quirks, words are inserted or omitted so as best to mystify the simplest meaning, and answer the lawyer's anything but simple purpose,) and ignorant of such language as the brothers were, they were yet not so ignorant but that one thing was evident in the cloudy document which they with difficulty waded through — the name of Charles Mordaunt was but once mentioned, and then only at the commencement. In all the entangled rigmarole which ensued, every possible event was alluded to,—death, divorce, separation, &c.; and amongst all the persons interested therein,—children, younger children, uncles, and heirs at law,—the name of Charles

Mordaunt appeared no more! Whether such silence was favourable or otherwise, neither Charles nor his brother had the slightest idea.

The next morning, however, settled the important point. The lawyer who had drawn up the settlement being consulted, politely informed Captain Mordaunt and his brother, that Mrs. Mordaunt being deceased, her child succeeded; who wanting twenty years, nine months, and two weeks of his majority, the property of the said child would be in the hands of trustees, and his person also, as he presumed his father could not provide a suitable residence for the inheritor of so considerable a fortune as Mrs. Mordaunt's death had placed in the possession of her child.

To describe the two brothers' astonishment would be vain. Poor Charles was completely silenced; but Richard, a rough sailor, a man of high spirit and quick temper, as warm an advocate of justice as he was an enemy to all chicanery and deceit, spoke his feelings aloud. His words savoured more of truth than politeness, and more of feeling than of elegance; and as he uttered his malediction upon the vile instrument and its author, who had basely taken advantage of his bro-

ther's easy temper and honourable mind, to make him sign a paper which had rendered him a beggar, the hardened lawyer trembled, and he could have said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be *honest*." He spoke not; but his quivering lip showed that the words he had heard did find a passage to his "parchment" heart. Collecting hastily his papers with a trembling hand, he hurried from the house to give an account of what had occurred to his brother trustee.

The remainder of the day was passed by the brothers in consultation as to how they were to act. The seaman Mordaunt, though abusing and hating the profession, yet insisted that to the law alone could they apply to procure for the widower the care of his child and a portion of his wife's fortune. At this moment Edward St. Clair flashed across Charles Mordaunt's mind: a note was despatched to request his attendance on his unhappy friend; and his advice was asked, given, and followed. Such was the history of Edward's first brief.

The case was tried,—"Mordaunt *v.* Scot." One of the ablest barristers in the land was retained for the defendant, and Edward St. Clair for the

plaintiff. In the opinion of all his friends Edward was mad to undertake the cause; he was sure to lose it, and the consequence would be the loss of his reputation also. In the eyes of the law, Scot must triumph—at least so said, and thought, the lawyers; but the result proved their mistake.

Captain Mordaunt gained his suit. It was the triumph of justice, feeling, honour, and eloquence, which perhaps acquired additional power when in the hands of a youthful and exceedingly handsome man, the friend of him whose cause he advocated. Edward was victorious, though the defence was a masterpiece of subtilty, displaying the deepest researches into all the law's intricacies, especially as regarded settlements; producing authorities, and quoting chapter and verse, to prove their infallibility, so as to intimidate and astonish his hearers. Had the jury been lawyers, poor Edward's eloquence might, and possibly would, have failed before his learned antagonist; but as they were, happily for Captain Mordaunt, men of honest minds, simple feelings, and domestic habits, Edward identified his client's case with that of every father and every husband who heard him, or all who hoped to be such, and claimed their ver-

dict in his favour. Success was gained ; but, start not, gentle reader,—the price was fatal to Edward's professional career !

It is not in the broad path, but the narrow—not in the straight, but the crooked,—neither is it in light or in truth—but it is in darkness and trickery, that the law is conspicuous. Its jargon and technicalities become more the objects of acquirement in the eyes of its followers, than its original intentions and justice ; and, consequently, the application of its power depending entirely upon the nice arrangement of words, instead of the simple demonstration of sense, throws the community at large into the hands of those whose interest it is to mystify. Edward had dared to deviate from the beaten track ; he had dared to feel and to make others feel ; he had addressed the heart as well as the head—the common sense, and not the legal research of the jury. Such doctrines as Edward had advanced being utterly subversive of attorneys' interests, his powers as a lawyer were ridiculed, and, in commiseration of the solicitor whose designs he had baffled, they rose in arms against him. He had shortly the pleasure of discovering that his professional sun had

risen and set in the cause of "Mordaunt *versus* Scot."

Edward was severely disappointed; but he still continued his studies, though with apathy, and without interest or hope. His popularity as a man, however, considerably increased; and the Duke of Ashford, admiring his eloquence, offered to bring him into parliament. Edward felt that it was not fame, but money, that he required; and expenses might ensue from the honourable distinction of forming one of the legislature. The proposition was, however, agreed to, and he became a member of the new parliament about to assemble. Ellen was transported from Gower Street to Westminster: the air was more genteel, but less pure, and the Duke of Ashford visited her more frequently, to the horror of Mrs. Willis, who commented thereon to her friend Miss Croak, as well as on the frequency of Ellen's appearance in Lady Lucy Elden's carriage.

His attendance on the House of Commons gave the *coup de grace* to Edward's professional studies, already become hateful from the envenomed tongues of the fraternity; but with the change of pursuits and abode came, alas! ad-

ditional expenses, without prospect of additional resources. Edward sighed; Ellen cast a wistful glance to that quarter of the metropolis inhabited by her father; but it was like poor Hotspur's northern glance to the Earl of Northumberland —equally disappointing and vain. Happily for Ellen's quiet, Lord and Lady St. Clair left England on a tour to Paris and Switzerland; and for some time they were lost to the gay world of London, and to their admiring neighbours in Warwickshire. His hopeful nephew and heir Ernest, with his sister, accompanied them. Their suite was numerous, and they made the fortunes of the hotel-keepers at Paris and Geneva where they lodged, and a proportionate harvest was reaped by all the innkeepers on the road, from our native "Ship" at Dover to the smallest *auberge* in the smallest canton of the *unsophisticated* Swiss.

Lord and Lady St. Clair's temporary expatriation from their native soil had its cause—pecuniary embarrassments! About the time that Edward's eloquence—to use the expression of a young barrister present—cut his own throat, his cousin Ernest was equally trying his persuasive powers on the hustings of the county town of ——, in the character of

candidate "for the distinguished honour of representing the said county in parliament." Had he possessed it in its greatest perfection, his eloquence would have been vain in the person of the unpopular candidate for the county of ——, in which melancholy character Ernest St. Clair daily appeared before an uproarious mob. His part was soon merely pantomimic; he waved his arms, bowed his head, and smiled, in return for pelting, hooting, and reviling; with the increase of which bad manners, only so much the more seemed his politeness to gain strength.

But, alas! as it was not by the laws of Chesterfield that the election was to be decided, but by very different rules, those of a mob! Mr. Ernest St. Clair had the misfortune to be last on the poll; and he retired from the contest with blackened eyes, bruised limbs, hoarse voice, a disappointed heart, and his uncle Lord St. Clair twenty thousand pounds poorer than when the contest began. A foreign tour was the best restorative for all these various ills. To save was, however, his lordship's grand object; and with almost regal splendour he accomplished his economical object, to the marvelling eyes of all beholders in the lands

he visited. When will the gifts of fortune be more equally balanced in our fair isle ?—or would it be advantageous that they should be so ? The legislator says all would then be poor ; the philosopher, that contentment would balance the evil ; the moralist, that what is just is right—unjust, wrong :—and of all the crying injustices that ever disgraced a land, the invidious distinction between children of the same parents, from whence springs the enormous inequality of wealth, is the greatest ; a distinction which in people of old title and ancient property is not only excusable, but perhaps reasonable ; this, however, cannot be urged in defence of the petty squires, merchants, barons or baronets of yesterday, the tribe of Messrs. White, Black and Brown, *creating* an elder son !—as in a litter of cubs, saving one whilst the rest perish !

Edward and Ellen were not ignorant of the cause of Lord and Lady St. Clair's tour. The first took it little to heart ; but Ellen wept torrents of tears when she saw a bill upon her father's town mansion announcing it to be let, and out of her slender purse pensioned the old porter, who was in consequence dismissed from his office. With

crocodile tears did this hoary veteran in deceit bewail to his young mistress his hard fate in being removed from his well-worn leathern chair, to seek in his old age another master and another perhaps less easy resting-place. He wept sore, lamenting a poor servant's hardships; spoke much of his long services, but nothing of his long savings; of his large family, but never mentioned that through Lord St. Clair's interest the sons were all snugly provided for in the customs or excise, and that his daughters were perfectly capable of maintaining themselves and their father too *if* such necessity had been required; but who, having been brought up genteelly, knowing three words of French, two tunes on the piano, and something of fine work, preferred the leisure of home, where they might exercise their talents, to the thraldom of servitude, where such acquirements might not be properly appreciated. Of this Ellen knew nothing. She only knew that poor old John More was thinner than in her time; and that it was a shame, whilst a shilling remained in her purse, to allow one still wearing her father's livery-coat to appear in threadbare garments.

Old John More had just departed with Miss

Ellen's (as he termed her) bounty in his pocket, and laughter in his sleeve at her credulity, when Sir William Crawford was announced. Lord St. Clair's departure and its cause, became the topic of discourse, which Ellen spoke of with much feeling, her heart most particularly softened by her late interview with the discarded porter.

"Oh, your father's distresses will soon get right, I dare say," answered Sir William cheerfully; "do not annoy yourself about them, Mrs. St. Clair."

"I cannot but think of *him* wanting money who has had ever such wealth at command; and, I must confess, I have my scruples at retaining his allowance: I think I ought to resign a part at least, and were it not for Edward and little Pamela I would not hesitate a moment."

"And what does your father allow you?" said Sir William, looking surprised: "this is the first I ever heard of it."

"Five hundred a year."

"Indeed! and since when, may I ask, have you been so highly favoured?"

"A few weeks after our marriage, we had a letter from his banker and ours, to tell us that

such a sum would be annually paid us, but that the donor did not choose his name should appear."

"Very delicate indeed of his lordship; but how did you discover it was him?"

"Oh! it could be no one else; and, indeed, from no one else would we accept such bounty."

"Very well then, it is yours, so keep it; when Lord St. Clair dies, you must have full that or more; so you need have no scruples on the subject."

"But whilst he lives, I should perhaps make restitution of a part."

"Restitution! God bless me, my dear child, you talk as if you had picked your father's pocket of his purse. But suppose your father was to take back this allowance, how would you exist?"

"God knows!" replied Ellen with a sigh: "I should put my trust in Providence; he will support us."

"Providence will not support you if you decline to profit by his kindness. You were in distress—your father's heart apparently hardened towards you; suddenly, as if by some miraculous interposition, he bestows his bounty upon

you, by which you are just enabled to live; which bounty, take my word for it, he has never felt the loss of. I shall be seriously angry with you if you think of giving up what is so justly yours. In overacting the daughter's part, you will strangely forget that of the wife and mother."

"Oh! Sir William, do not for a moment imagine I could forget my dear, dear Edward and my darling child!" exclaimed Ellen with tears in her eyes: "the love I bear them would make me lay down my life if it could do them service."

"And yet you would take the bread from their mouths!"

"Oh, no! I only wish to assist my father."

"Assist your father! — a fiddlestick's end!— you talk as if he was a beggar asking alms at the corner of the street. Come, we will see how poor he is: first," counting with his fingers, "an estate in Derbyshire, one in Nottinghamshire, the St. Clair Abbey property, that in Ireland, and a house in London, besides timber, plate, pictures, books, and a hundred other things. Why, child, the loss of twenty thousand pounds to him is a mere drop in the ocean.—Now are you satisfied?"

"I ought to be," said Ellen, laughing.

" Well, and now you must promise me to say nothing to Edward of the folly you have been hinting to me. Men are always governed by pretty wives; so he would yield his better judgment to please you, more especially as he might consider the money coming from Lord St. Clair as consequently yours to dispose of as you pleased."

" I promise you."

" Very well; so now adieu!"

CHAPTER VIII.

In the early pages of this story it is mentioned that, in personal beauty, at the time of their father's untimely end, the two boys Edward and Arthur St. Clair, were equally favoured by nature. As time flew onwards, circumstances altered; and though Arthur was hardly termed otherwise than good-looking even by the fastidious, yet the appellation of handsome could only be applied to his elder brother. As Edward's face and figure gradually developed themselves into the very perfection of form, uniting grace, agility, strength and beauty, his little brother—for so, from his inferiority of size, he was generally called—seemed for a long time to be waiting Nature's determination as to whether she would vouchsafe to mould him into any form at all. However, this doubt did not exist too long; and when Arthur was of an age to hold the King's commission in the army,

his broad shoulders, erect carriage, and agreeable countenance shaded by a profusion of dark hair, made him appear very far from a disgrace to his majesty's service. For the five preceding years Arthur had had, however, to endure, from his own family, constant attacks upon his plainness. He had seen the good looks of Edward gain for him hearts, smiles and influence, and place him in a far different position from himself; giving him a somewhat invidious preeminence, and granting him a power which the lowest dependant acknowledged. Arthur loved his brother too tenderly to wish to deprive him of that favour which, though granted to the graces of his person, *he* knew might have been with equal justice awarded to the virtues of his mind; but his love for his brother did not blind him as to the narrow-minded affection of which he was the object, and which he had ample opportunity to judge of dispassionately. It was not that Arthur St. Clair felt himself undervalued, for he was well aware that he was not valued at all; and this knowledge at first caused a slight tinge of mortification to obscure his better feelings, which was, however, soon removed when he reflected on the character of those whose favour he

could not obtain, from the want of a certain regularity in feature, of a few inches in height, and of the same agility of spirit as well as limb which made Edward St. Clair so preeminent.

Arthur knew himself; he had no vanity, but he felt that being neither considered or understood by them, the less he lived with his relations the better; gradually therefore he withdrew himself to where he was more appreciated, and at the moment he joined his regiment in the West, of England, two years had elapsed since he had seen any St. Clair but his brother. Differently as they were treated,—different as was their appearance, tastes, and pursuits,—the brothers had hearts and understandings in unison; they loved each other tenderly, and differed only in one point,—the estimation in which they held their own family. "I grant you little Ellen is an angel," wrote Arthur to his brother; "but that is all I can do. Almost every other St. Clair has little sense, and no feeling. I only hope that you may never have to put one or the other to the test."

Arthur was not one in whom happiness developed itself by overflowing spirits, or on whom misfortunes would produce despair. He kept

the even tenor of his way; performed his military duties with zeal; was kind and attentive to his soldiers; friendly with his brother officers, and never so near perfect happiness as when, closing his door on all intruders, he could revel in the luxury of a book by the fireside; for books had ever been to him friends, companions, and amusement. His means were small; to attempt therefore to vie in expense with his more prosperous associates he knew would be vain as well as wrong. His branch of the service happily provided him with the means of riding, which was the only luxury he coveted, and the only advantage he gained by his profession; in which profession, should a second Peninsular war arise, imagination led him to feel that he should distinguish himself. He would die like his father, or live to found a family, like the great hero of the day, that should make all other St. Clairs hide their diminished heads!

Till those fortunate days arrived, however, he had to plod through the dull routine of a barrack life; to keep all his heroic deeds for the subjects of his dreams, and adopt instead, with what appetite he might, the common-place performances of a

subaltern of a cavalry regiment on the peace establishment.

Time moved on, and its periods were only perceptible to Arthur by the various marches and countermarches which his regiment performed till, in the summer of 18—, they were stationed in the town of Dartmore. One lovely afternoon, about the end of August, Arthur St. Clair was riding in the neighbourhood of these his quarters. His road lay along the banks of a beautiful river, the opposite side to which formed the boundary to the extensive park and grounds of Rosmoor Hall, the seat of the Earl of Rosmoor. A pleasure-boat added much to the beauty of a very lovely summer scene, as it flew up and down or across the river, at the will of the chief of the lively party it contained, Lord Milbank, the earl's only son, who held in his hand the rope which governed the sail. The boat had just swept by St. Clair, and reached a turn in the river, where, meeting with a sharp current of air, the sail was unexpectedly filled, and burst from the feeble grasp of him who held it. This was not all: the youth, in trying to catch again at the rope, lost his balance and fell overboard. Then arose a tremendous cry—" It is his

lordship !—Save his lordship !—My lord will be drowned !"—and in another moment two of the party had sprung overboard to his assistance. One of the men soon reached Lord Milbank ; but the other, either from the strength of the current, or being a less expert swimmer, Arthur easily perceived was in imminent danger himself, and was every moment driven further from the boat without any one apparently being conscious he was in the river at all. The man was evidently sinking —there was no time for consideration ; dressed as he was, Arthur threw himself from his horse and into the water, and succeeded in gaining the poor man, and bearing him exhausted to the shore. The bank was extremely precipitous, and, to assist him in dragging up his lifeless burthen, Arthur extended his hand to try and catch at some rough brushwood which grew thereon. His effort was unsuccessful ; the weight of the man was evidently bearing him downwards, and in another instant, the probability was, that he and his fainting companion would have been again at the mercy of the waters, when St. Clair found his hand firmly laid hold of. Whence proceeded the support he had no time to observe ; it gave him the

opportunity of regaining his breath, and the next moment he had sprung to the shore, when, turning to see to whom he was indebted probably for his own life, and certainly for that of his companion, he beheld a female, neither uglynor old, nor coarse nor countryfied—but beautiful, young, and elegantly attired! One glance, however, was all he allowed himself; the poor man whom he had brought to shore claimed all his attention,—an attention in which his accidental companion joined with great eagerness. Their united efforts succeeded; the poor man, who proved an inhabitant of the village, and had the care of the young lord's pleasure-boat, was soon perfectly himself again, and most profuse in his thanks to the pair who had assisted him, addressing himself particularly to the lady, whom he was probably acquainted with.

"Nay, nay, this will never do, Johnson—give credit where credit is due—that gentleman is your saviour, not I; my hand served the purpose of a slender twig, in giving you both support for a second, but it was he saved your life. Now hasten home before your wife hears of your being in the water, and," giving him a piece of money, "here is something to console you for your dripping

clothes. Now, make haste and be gone; but do not make haste and forget this gentleman's kindness: and remember, if you find a fellow-creature in equal straits, strive to follow his example."

When St. Clair and the incognita were alone, he rather expected she would have declared who she was:—not at all; and in return for his profuse thanks for the assistance her small hand had afforded him, she only laughed.

"Our sex are so rarely of any use to any one," she said, "that, compared to what they generally perform that is advantageous, I may be well proud;—but as that is a very unworthy method of extracting renown, I beg to decline your compliments, and in return only entreat my fine performances may be judged of by yours: you ventured your life for another,—whom no one in the boat seemed likely to extend a finger to save, so entirely were all engrossed by the danger at first, and wet jacket afterwards, of the earl's heir-apparent. I, on the contrary, endangered nothing but my lace veil, which I perceive has been somewhat damaged by the brambles on the bank. I trust whatever ills you may have received will not be of greater importance; and for

the better securing so desirable an object, I would advise you to mount that very pretty horse and gallop off to your barracks with the speed of light. —Adieu !"

So saying, with equal swiftness to that she recommended, the lady darted from St. Clair, and was out of sight in a moment.

If it had rested with Arthur's voluntary communication, the history of his adventure would have lived and died unheard of by his companions: but as his dripping clothes could hardly escape the observation of the loiterers in the barrack-yard on his return home, these observations led to inquiries, to which the answers, though as brief as possible, yet contained the substance of all that was to be told—enough for conversation at the moment, and of sufficient interest to be revived to advantage at the mess-room dinner afterwards.

" Here 's to your fair incognita of the morning," said a captain, nodding to St. Clair, as he tossed off his glass of wine ; " for *fair* we will presume she was, though you have never avowed as much."

" Have you any idea who she was ?" inquired the colonel.

St. Clair was prevented answering in the negative, by a small thin voice exclaiming, " I have a great idea, if I may be allowed to speak."

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction of the speaker,—a Mr. somebody, the surgeon's guest, whose name no one had troubled himself to ask, or to remember if told. He had hitherto eaten his dinner in silence, unnoticed by any one but his surgical patron; now, however, all were attentive as to what was to follow, and perhaps not least of all St. Clair, though his countenance betrayed less of curiosity than any of the others.

" I have many reasons to suspect—nay, to know, that the young lady ——"

" Oh, she *was* a young lady!" interrupted the above-mentioned captain. " I thought as much."

The speaker continued:—

" The young lady, I believe and know, for I stopped at the hall on my way here, was Lady Clara Danvers."

" Lady Clara Danvers!" screamed three captains, a cornet, and the major. — " And handsome?"

" Beautiful!" replied the informer.

" Charming!" pronounced the chorus.

"And, moreover, rich: Lady Clara has ten thousand a year."

"Ten thousand a year!" was again echoed by the majority of the regiment. "St. Clair, you are the luckiest dog alive!"

The beauty of the regiment, Sir Ferdinand Morris, whispered to his crony, Lord Mercer, whose title gave him a certain eminence, about equal to that on which Sir Ferdinand's good looks had placed him—

"I wish it had been you or I, instead of that slow fellow St. Clair, who will never be able to push his luck."

"Who is Lady Clara Danvers?" inquired the colonel.

"Niece to Lord Rosmoor," replied the surgeon's friend. "She is also his ward, and going to be married."

"Married!" exclaimed a dozen voices rather dolorously.

"Yes, to an Irish lord: he is not down at present, but shortly expected."

"Then you have still a chance," said the colonel, turning to Sir Ferdinand Morris, who had the reputation of being a decided lady-killer.

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The baronet answered with a complaisant smile, as if to say he little doubted his success, even in the Irish lord's presence, should it be worth his while to exert himself for the prize.

A pause ensued. The guest, whose importance had increased with the information he had communicated, so that from not having drunk wine with any one for half an hour, he had in the last ten minutes swallowed as many glasses with the various officers of the regiment, was not inclined to let the subject drop, and with glistening eyes, and rather unsteady voice, proceeded :

" Lady Clara is a very *odd* young lady,—people are half afraid of her at the balls ; not but that she will dance with any one, but then she is a ———" The speaker hesitated, whether from the wine he had swallowed, or from any other cause, was doubtful.

" What—what is she ?" demanded almost every one. " Is she a radical ?" said one.—" Is she a fool ?" asked another.—" Mad ?" " A flirt ?" repeated the rest.

" Oh no, no, no !—she is a methodist."

" Rather a wet one, I should imagine, by her taste for dancing," observed the colonel.

"Oh, she does not preach," replied the simple guest.

"Only practise," said Arthur St. Clair, "if charity be one of the doctrines of her sect."

"And do you not know the name of her intended?" inquired Sir Ferdinand Morris.

"Lord something—as proud as Lucifer, and as poor as a rat,—he never speaks to any one. They do say the old earl would not have been sorry if Lady Clara had chosen to fancy his son, the youth who fell in the water to-day; but not a bit of it, she would have nothing to say to him; so this fine gentleman secured the prize. They also say she fell in love with him for clearing a great fence out a-hunting, which had planted the whole field. They became acquainted; and he went to Rosmoor Hall, proposed, and all was settled in a moment."

"She is a horsewoman, then?" inquired some one.

"Yes; she rides famously, either on the road or in the field."

"Then our only chance," said the cornet, "is to go a-hunting, and ride *at* this Irish lord. It will be odd indeed if one of *ours* do not beat him

out of the field, and out of his heiress's good graces into the bargain."

"It seems our only chance," observed St. Clair, smiling; "fortune having so ordained that we, the —— regiment, should have only heard of Lady Clara's existence at the same moment with her engagement. Had it been otherwise, there can be little question that Lady Clara could never have hesitated between the Irishman and *us*."

"For those who do not love hunting, there is yet the conventicle,—he, he, he!" said the surgeon.

"D—— the conventicle!" muttered several voices; with which forcible opinion the conversation ended.

Whatever curiosity the stranger's account of Lady Clara Danvers may have given rise to in his audience, they one and all felt it was a useless spirit to indulge it as regarded any human being living within Lord Rosmoor's orbit. His lordship's character was well known; and every regiment on quitting the Dartmore barracks had bequeathed to their successors a long score of injuries at the hands of the said earl, to be paid off with interest whenever an opportunity offered itself; but which score,

time, instead of liquidating, had only increased, as it would continue to do, from the unequal nature of the contest. Nothing less than a general rising of the populace against his house and property would have made Lord Rosmoor regard the barracks erected within view of his park wall otherwise than as a nest of hornets associated to annoy him as a game-preserver, fox-destroyer, &c.

Lord Rosmoor was a man of enormous wealth; he stood at the head of his race, supported by his gold, and all the power that gold commands, which, as regards others, comprises everything but love: this he had never inspired in man, woman, or child, as may be naturally inferred from the fact of his never having received or deserved the poor man's blessing in return for the smallest donation; no hearth shone the brighter, no board was the heavier, for his charity. He was a hard landlord and severe master; without skill as a shot, he was a strict preserver of game, always in arms against poachers and every sort of trespasser, from the petty pilferer of a handful of dried sticks, to the neighbouring peer who would occasionally canter over his grounds; and as to the whole race

of fox-hunters, amongst whom he included the military, with them he was at open war, as well as fox-preservers. If keys and locks, bars and spikes, and threatening boards of caution to all trespassers, could have availed, Lord Rosmoor might have lived content; but extensive as was his property, enormous as was his fortune, and powerful as they both made him, still there were those who could and would live independent of his sway; and fox-hunting flourished even beneath his eye, as often might be traced by a line of broken rails, unhinged gates, and smashed fences,—scenes of devastation over which his lordship would groan as if reparation were impossible, whilst the authors of the mischief were probably in the neighbouring county long before the discovery was made.

Lord Rosmoor had an only son, Lord Milbank, and it was a popular notion, from some boyish and solitary instance of good-nature, that when this youth grew to manhood, he might effect a change for the better in his father; but, alas! the hope was vain,—Lord Milbank's influence was in time shown only by the blacker dye of the warning boards, the locking up still more of gates, and the greater persecution of poachers, fox-

hunters, &c. Lord Milbank was accordingly resigned as a forlorn hope about the time when unexpectedly a new light burst forth at Rosmoor in the person of Lady Clara Danvers, Lord Rosmoor's niece and ward.

The favoured few who were admitted within the walls, to share with the London guests the earl's hospitality, returned to their homes in raptures with her beauty and manners; but the climax of satisfaction as to this fair being was attained when she appeared in the hunting-field in the uniform of the hunt, made to perfection, and followed by a groom in the Rosmoor livery! a sight unheard of in such a place since livery coats were invented. The confidence this independent step of Lady Clara gave the whole host of sportsmen, who secretly quaked at Lord Rosmoor's enmity, need not be described; which confidence was increased still further by some slight favours ensuing, though with no great graciousness of manner on his lordship's part, at the intercession of his niece. Alas! poor Lord Rosmoor, his antipathy to fox-hunters seemed prophetic of disaster; for it was very true that, "in that fatal field of glory," Lord Fontenoy won his ward's

heart, and ruined all his fondly-treasured schemes of uniting her and her ten thousand a year to his son.

Lady Clara's marriage had been settled above a year at the period when Lord Milbank nearly vanished for ever from *terra firma* into the waters beneath it; and Arthur's gallantry in saving the humble partner of the young lord's bad fortune produced in Lady Clara Danvers an interest which she had no desire to disavow or subdue, and which induced her to exert her not inconsiderable influence with her uncle the morning after the disaster, so as to make him ride over to and actually enter the obnoxious barrack-yard, in order to inquire after Mr. St. Clair's health; a task his lordship performed without any great appearance of disgust, returning the military salute of the sentinel on guard with a sour countenance, but condescending bend of his stiff back-bone.

As in civility bound, Arthur St. Clair, two days after the earl's visit, returned the compliment. At the door of the mansion were in waiting a square heavy-looking cob (in technical language), and a light, airy, thorough-bred steed, equipped with a side-saddle; two descriptions of horses

which seemed to denote the probable appearance of the earl and his niece for their morning ride. Such was the case; and hardly had Arthur St. Clair deposited his card in the grenadier-looking footman's hand, ere they made their appearance. One glance from the bright eyes of Lady Clara showed he was recognised. Instead, therefore, of riding away, as he had intended, he checked his horse to return the bend of acknowledgment he received from her ladyship. This was not all,—she proceeded to introduce to her uncle "the gentleman who was so kind to poor Johnson." Lord Rosmoor bowed with solemnity, and pronounced the pleasure and honour he had in making *Captain* St. Clair's acquaintance, in a tone of voice which seemed to say that the pleasure and the honour were both on the captain's side. The party being mounted, St. Clair was about to take leave; but that was not at all Lady Clara's intention. The *ennui* of a *tête-à-tête* ride with her uncle she knew from almost daily experience; a much less interesting person than Arthur would have been welcome as a third; but, as it was, he was the very person she wished to see more of: most eagerly, therefore, did she in-

quire if he had any particular object that morning.

"Not any," was the reply.

"Then, Lord Rosmoor, we must beg Mr. St. Clair to accompany us in our ride to the Deer Park."

His lordship did not look very well pleased at the proposition; to render it therefore more palatable, his judicious and observing niece added, "I dare say he has never seen the stags, nor the oaks, which are the finest in England."

"In the world, you might say," said the earl, with a more cordial expression of countenance. "I shall be proud to have the honour of Captain St. Clair's opinion of them."

St. Clair had nothing to do but to bow, smile, accept the proposal, and rein in his hot little charger to the kind of jog-trot which was Lord Rosmoor's customary pace.

Lady Clara shortly found that *ennui* was not banished by the presence of her new acquaintance. Arthur was not a great talker. The earl only spoke upon particular subjects, laying down laws, opinions, and rules, which were not intended to be answered, but listened to; and to-day, none

of these subjects happening to be uppermost in his mind, he did not speak, but only thought of his untoward fate in riding familiarly with a subaltern in his majesty's service, quartered in his majesty's offensive barracks, and habited in his majesty's uniform; all arising from the said subaltern having, by his officious zeal, pulled a poor wretch out of the water who would have been just as well in it; and having thus pushed himself to the very threshold of Rosmoor Hall,—that hall which had stood the covert and open attack of various successive regiments for ages, and which, spite of all and everybody, had never yet been disgraced by the presence of a uniform, which Lord Rosmoor regarded with as great horror as the economist —— himself,—with this difference, that the member of the House of Commons is indignant against the price of the coat, whilst the peer's antipathy rested with the coat itself and all its wearers.

The ride proceeded in silence, Lady Clara rather regretting the encouragement she had given to St. Clair to accompany them, he being probably bored to death. On that head, however, she might have been perfectly easy. St. Clair knew

as little of *ennui* as he did of that state of excitement called high spirits. Though silent, he could find pleasure in admiring the pleasing scenery around, the action of Lady Clara's horse, and the grace with which she managed it; and also in wondering that an earl with sixty thousand a year could throw his leg over such a brute as that Lord Rosmoor rode.

They reached at length the Deer Park, where they were hastily joined by a stout man on a stout horse, in a stout coat, who, taking off his hat to the earl, was accosted by his lordship with,

"Well, Clarke, what news?"

"News enough, my lord; four poachers taken this morning."

"Taken! What, with guns and snares, so as to have little trouble in committing them?"

"Better than that, your lordship. One of the gang levelled his piece at Perkins, and put him into bodily fear, as he can swear at the next sessions; and which will make the case, by good luck, a transportable offence. I wish they had all done the same; but it was only that old offender Tom Jones, who ought to have been hung long ago."

"That he should indeed; but tell me all the particulars;"—and Lord Rosmoor edged his horse nearer his steward's.

Arthur edged his in a contrary direction, rather more towards Lady Clara, whose heightened colour he could observe increase at every word spoken by her uncle and his minion; proclaiming thereby, as well as words could do, how different were her views and feelings from those of her uncle and guardian.

"Of course you shoot?" she said at last to St. Clair, evidently following the train of ideas Mr. Clarke's information had given rise to.

"If it is 'of course,' I perhaps ought to be ashamed to acknowledge that I do not."

"The shame is more for those that do, if it is at the expense of morality, feeling, and personal liberty. Do you hunt, then?"

"It is fortunate that I do not care much about it, for I could not afford hunters. Whatever you may think as respects shooting, I fear, with regard to the other sport, you will not consider my want of taste as so easily to be pardoned."

"Oh! as to that, I dare say you do many things much better."

"I do nothing well."—(Lady Clara smiled.)—"It is not mock humility either which makes me declare myself so superficial a character," continued Arthur. "I know little of most things, and nothing well; whether it be want of sufficient power to exert the intellect I possess, or a deficiency of that intellect itself, I know not, but to advance beyond mediocrity seems to me impossible: yet, with all this, I am ashamed to own that the dissatisfaction I feel at making such an avowal is not so great as it ought to be. However, if report speaks true, I address one who knows not the meaning of mediocrity."

"The opinion being formed by the society I move in," answered Lady Clara, turning her keen eye upon the mass of mortal flesh which contained the immortal spirit of Lord Rosmoor.

St. Clair laughed. "I suspect that your own character alone is the standard by which the world's judgment is formed."

"The world is very kind: I have as many, if not more faults than my neighbours, I believe; but I walk in a path by myself, so they are not easily discovered. I like hunting better than

dancing, reading better than work, talking better than music, and good people better than bad. Such is my character, neither very extraordinary nor exalted; but as it is the custom for girls of my age to adore dancing, detest books, to play and sing from morning till night with or without talent, and to hold all moral people as saints, I am so far singular; and singularity, Heaven knows! is anything but synonymous with cleverness."

A pause ensued. From beneath his dark eyelashes Arthur contemplated the countenance of his companion as it gradually softened off to the quiet composure of thought from the animation speaking had given.

"Do you ever go to church?" suddenly inquired Lady Clara.

"Sometimes."

"Then pray go to St. Mary's—the preacher is admirable. Whenever I can escape from our parish church and Dr. Drone, I always run down to hear him. The church is not far from the barracks."

"How is your favourite named?"

"Foster."

"A little of the evangelical order, I think I have heard."

"A little exalted, I believe; but that suits me. I am of so cold a nature, that your lukewarm divines can hardly arouse me to attention, much more devotion; but Mr. Foster could inspire me were I down at freezing point. Perhaps, however, you do not require such stimulants."

St. Clair regarded her attentively.

"You are very young to entertain such serious thoughts."

"Are they serious?—not more so than thinking what one is to eat, or what one is to put on. We all know we cannot live without food or raiment, and I suppose we all know that our souls without religion would do as ill as our bodies without nourishment."

"Has Lord Rosmoor the merit of instilling such ideas into his ward's head?"

Lady Clara smiled. "If I had any instructor in the path of life, (a sad methodistical word, I fear,) it was affliction."

"Affliction? have *you* known sorrow?" inquired Arthur earnestly.

"My father's death was the only misfortune I

have ever known; but it was one which I could hardly have survived without the lessons of resignation he himself taught me, from a book with which he was deeply conversant — the Bible."

Lady Clara paused for a moment, and then continued: "But I must have wearied you sadly with my domestic life. How in the world did we arrive at it! I remember now,—it was by the way of the church. Pray remember Mr. Foster to-morrow."

"Shall you be there?" inquired St. Clair.

"Certainly, if my uncle should chance to be lazy, or sick, or any one of the hundred impediments which prevent so many good people from doing what they are so desirous to do, — say their prayers: pray come, and we will compare notes as to the discourse."

St. Clair was most ready to acquiesce: Lady Clara told him the hour. No sooner was this arrangement formed, than Lord Rosmoor, violently checking his horse, uttered an exclamation of deep feeling.

"What is it, my uncle?" inquired Lady Clara, advancing her horse to the side of his lordship.

" Why, the key," he replied, regarding with a look of dismay the massive gate towards which he was advancing: " I have forgotten to bring the key, and we shall have to go round three miles to find a way out of the park."

" Surely, my lord," observed St. Clair, " your groom opened the gate at our entrance."

" Very possibly, but the key of this gate I have not got:" for Lord Rosmoor, in his zeal against fox-hunters, had every variety of locks placed upon his different gates, which, as in this instance, proved more often the cause of annoyance to himself than others.

" It does not matter," exclaimed Lady Clara; " I know a place where the pales are broken, and our horses can easily jump over;" and without waiting a reply, she touched her willing steed's side with her small foot, and, bounding forward, soon reached the place she mentioned, over which she sprang.

" It is nothing to speak of," said Lady Clara, as, turning again her horse with admirable grace, she came back over the fence to her uncle's side.

" Nothing, Clara! What folly! — my horse cannot leap, and I hate leaping; it is only an

encouragement to intruders and trespassers; it is always at the expense of property. Who made that very gap, but some of your confounded fox-hunters? No hedges, no paling or wall, can stand secure when they and their imitators exist in a country. I will not leap, — I will not even lead my horse over, — I will not set so bad an example."

"Very well," said Lady Clara good-humouredly, "the day is so fine, that a longer ride will be rather pleasant than otherwise; though it is but fair to Mr. St. Clair to tell him, that if he *can* leap, his way is over that fence, and that the road we are about to take is at least four miles about."

Arthur would willingly have continued with his present companions, but he thought Lord Rosmoor looked as if he expected him to take Lady Clara's speech in the light of a hint to retire; he therefore bowed, and moved towards the exit proposed to him. A sudden thought, however, entered Lord Rosmoor's mind; and calling back St. Clair, he brought forth, with some circumlocution, an invitation to dinner on the following day, most devoutly hoping that he would be engaged. He was disappointed: St. Clair bowed, and expressed the

pleasure he should have in waiting upon his lordship. His lordship, however, did not in the least appear to partake of that pleasure, of which his niece seemed to have a more just sense, as Arthur was not slow to observe ; and her parting smile dwelt on his mind as he rapidly pursued his way to the town of Dartmore.

It need not be mentioned that on the following day Arthur was most punctual in his attendance at St. Mary's. Lady Clara, however, was not there ; his thoughts therefore were entirely engrossed by the preacher, who was indeed highly favoured in that commanding talent of eloquence, which in his hands was converted to the most noble purpose, the inculcating divine truths, not with the presumption of a demagogue, but with the humility of a Christian, who dares to speak fearlessly, and does not, by throwing the threats of the gospel into the shade, bring the promises so much into light as to be all that is observable by ordinary hearers. St. Clair listened attentively, and perhaps not the less so from the wish of imparting the substance of what he heard to Lady Clara at dinner.

The dinner at Rosmoor was, of course, sump-

tuous. Amongst the numerous guests there was not one who did not aspire to place himself at Lady Clara's side: Arthur, by great good fortune, however, found himself one of the two happy men; Lord Milbank was the other, who, having little to say and much to carve, left him in undisputed possession of Lady Clara's attention during the whole repast. She was, as usual, all grace and animation; her fine eyes at one moment sparkling with delight — the next melting into tenderness. Of course, the sermon of that morning was inquired into.

"I could not go myself," said Lady Clara, "as we had a charity sermon at our church; so my uncle thought it right to attend, for example's sake, with his five-pound note in hand. Do you know, I think there is a great deal too much ostentation in our religion. The poor-box at the door of a Catholic church abroad is worth all our silver plates handed about to shame people into being charitable,—to force what they can little spare from the poor, and what they never miss from the rich. And then the farce of people of rank being the beggars! as if a man who would turn from the clerk could be charmed to put his

money into the plate of a peeress. Many Catholic charitable institutions are admirable and unostentatious, (which is more than can be said of ours:) as, for example, the '*Sœurs de la Charité*' in France, and the different confraternities in Italy, composed of all classes; particularly, as you may remember, that of '*La Misericordia*.'"

"I never was in Italy, or out of England."

"I have then had the start of you; I was four years in Italy."

"I could have imagined as much," replied St. Clair: "a character so decided, so precocious and enthusiastic, could not have been cherished beneath our sunless skies, and at eighteen have reached a point of excellence which our sober-paced countrywomen rarely attain at thirty. But you should have mercy upon us untravelled boobies, and on me in particular, who am conscious of every sort of deficiency in the eyes of all, much more those who have knowledge beyond our silver cliffs."

"I believe you are seeking for a compliment; but I will not give it."

"No," replied Arthur, blushing; "I know

too well what I am, and what the generality of my countrymen are, to dream of my words being capable of contradiction. I have also seen enough of foreigners in England to know how superior they are to us in manner, and in all those little social talents which are requisite in society."

"Very possibly; but, to confess the truth, I know nothing of society. Abroad I saw a great many people, but it was as a child. During the four years I passed in Italy, I never went regularly into company; my time was occupied in studying its beautiful language, in acquiring a taste for music, painting, and sculpture, and in gazing with rapture on its cloudless skies and clearness of atmosphere, which to us northerns makes the powers of vision almost miraculous. But, young as I was, I could not help marvelling, even then, that where Providence was so bountiful, and with so lavish a hand had bestowed the gift of beauty, man, vile man, should deform by his wild passions, ignorance, and folly, the whole face of nature, transforming a paradise into an *inferno*, (the English word cannot be used to ears polite,) or into a puppet-show; for I am sure one half of

the Catholic ceremonies there deserve no better title, although they fill up more than one half of an Italian's life."

"And is Italy so fallen?"

"Alas, poor country! But we have had enough, and too much of this; there is Lord Rosmoor trying to catch your eye for a glass of wine, and Mr. Evans mine."

CHAPTER IX.

Arthur St. Clair did not fall in love with Lady Clara,—at least he did not know it if he did. Her being the affianced bride of another was a strong reason against it; but had it been otherwise, his nature was too modest to allow him such early presumption. "If you were here, my dear Edward," he wrote to his brother, "and had as frequent opportunities of knowing Lady Clara, I think Lord Fontenoy might feel some jealous pangs, and Lady Clara's prudence be rather questionable; but I, alas! can give no alarm, and ought to dread none. Am I to be pitied or envied? In one respect, the last—for it is my very insignificance which has made me on the friendly terms I am with one of the most bewitching females I ever met, or ever imagined it possible to meet with. You tell me to describe her. Fancy a woman perhaps rather below than above the

common standard of females, well made, but not slightly; her shoulders broad, and her head placed on them with a degree of perfection I have rarely witnessed; her hair black, or of that deep brown which approaches the nearest to it: her eyes splendid, and, fringed above and below with the longest of eyelashes, the colour of her hair, surmounted by soft pencilled eyebrows; her mouth is well shaped, and her red lips, when unclosed, display the finest teeth in the world; her complexion would be criticised by you, who rave about lilies and roses, for they exist not therein, neither separately nor combined,—for I am bound to confess that my dear Lady Clara's skin, though smooth and clear, is brown!

"Her character at this moment is singular. She is a complete child of nature; and as such are usually mere milk-and-water concerns, with no great attribute but folly, she is by many regarded as a child of art. They will not credit her natural character, because it shows itself by talking on subjects beyond her years; by being capable of feeling deeply, yet enjoying greatly; and by her having decided opinions upon religion, morals, people, and things, which she supports with a

good-humoured obstinacy that makes me, as far as I am concerned, totally incapable of contradicting her. She has gained the character of a methodist by running after a certain evangelical preacher in this place—very good, no doubt, but they tell me the poor old parson whom she abandons is almost broken-hearted at her defalcation, which Lady Clara will hear of some day, (I do not say it is I who shall tell her,) and then those pretty eyes of hers will overflow with tears of regret.

"Whilst, on one hand, she gained the character of methodism, she was, on the other, very near losing all character whatsoever, by supporting a female who happened to have lost hers. The merits of the case I know nothing of; the story had, however, been before the public, and the heroine of the tale,—a very pretty woman, as need not be observed—had the folly to appear at a public ball, and was subject to all the contumely, just or unjust, that could be heaped by her own sex upon a fallen sister. She had not the philosophy or hardihood to conceal the misery she endured, and whilst scorn flashed from the virtuous eyes of the individuals around—amongst whom

were many who had once feasted, sung, and laughed beneath her roof—she shrunk abashed and almost fainted, tears rolling down her cheeks. Lady Clara flew to her aid, and offering *eau de Cologne*, conversed with her for ten minutes about the heat of the room, the weather, &c. and then left her somewhat restored to her own self-love, and with the ire of the company both softened and divided as regarded herself; for on Lady Clara the half of their reproachful glances were now cast. That story has never been forgotten, and the slight acquaintance which has ensued between her and the outlawed female is of course magnified into extreme intimacy. A horrid little miss, one of a singing family in this neighbourhood, daughter of Sir Martin Thrush, had the impertinence to say to me the other night at a ball — where we met, 'Mamma has always been a little shy of Lady Clara since that unfortunate affair at the county ball, and would not allow any of us to sell at the same table at the bazaar, for there was no knowing what acquaintance we might have been led into in consequence; and, to be sure, it was very fortunate mamma was so clear sighted, for though Mrs. Compton did not actually sell at

Lady Clara's table, yet she bought of no other person, and was constantly at her stall.'

"I was ready to give the girl a sharp rebuke for her insolence, when my ire was diverted into smiles by rather a loud whisper in the delinquent's ear from her sister,—'La! Clementina, how can you talk so to Mr. St. Clair? he is always dining at the hall; he is Lady Clara's particular friend, and, as sure as you are alive, will repeat all that you have said; so we shall now have to thank you if we are not invited to the ball next month—and if mamma never gets that pattern of the gown Lady Clara promised, or if she lends us no more music!'

"The poor Clementina turned scarlet at her sister's information, and seemed ready to cry: she looked so miserable that I asked her to dance, by way of appeasing her fears and recruiting her nerves. The fright she had endured effectually tied her tongue, and she dared scarcely look in my face, much less converse during the period we were together in the dance."

A few days from the date of the above letter, a new scene opened at Rosmoor Hall. Lord Fontenoy arrived. So little had this important

personage been alluded to during the six weeks in which Arthur had hourly grown more familiar with Lord Rosmoor's family, that his idea had gradually faded from his mind, and a doubt would often arise as to whether Lady Clara was really as far engaged as report declared her to be.

Such, however, was decidedly the fact. Lord Rosmoor had at first hesitated and muttered something about poverty, but Lady Clara insisted that she had enough wealth for both. His lordship's consent was obtained, but only upon the condition that the marriage should not take place for two years. Whatever the lovers might think, there was nothing extremely unjust in Lord Rosmoor's prohibition, considering their youth, Lady Clara being only seventeen, and Lord Fontenoy in his twenty-third year, and considering also that the parties had been only one month acquainted. His lordship, however, had a secret reason for delay, hoping it would work some miracle in favour of his son, who, to do him justice, had the modesty to confess that, without some extraordinary interposition, there was little hope of his being able to rival so highly-favoured a being as Lord Fontenoy.

The day of Lord Fontenoy's arrival at the hall, Arthur St. Clair dined there ; and upon entering the drawing-room, he found that he intruded upon a *tête-à-tête* between Lady Clara and a young man of such singular good looks, that no question could arise as to his being the lover. Why Arthur's heart swelled almost to bursting, and the colour flew to his cheeks with an intenseness that made him almost meditate a retreat from the room, he himself could not explain ; for he was not in love, as he thought—so no one need presume to penetrate the cause of his emotion.

He made a bold effort, however, and advanced towards them. Lady Clara extended her hand as usual, and introduced him to Lord Fontenoy, who returned his salute ; and in the mean time having recovered his composure, Arthur asked Lady Clara if she had been riding that morning.

" No ; thinking Lord Fontenoy might arrive at any moment, I lent my horse to my cousin Lucy, who is also a new arrival since you have been here. She is very pretty ; so you must take care, Mr. St. Clair. Is she not pretty, Lord Fontenoy ?"

"If Mr. St. Clair admires beauty without grace or countenance, he may find a fitting object in Miss Trevor."

"He is severe," observed Lady Clara.

"He is spoilt," sighed Arthur in a low voice.

At dinner St. Clair got placed by Lord Milbank, who, he soon discovered, was not slightly annoyed at the return of the lover. Though, as has been shown, he was forced to confess that against such a rival, his chance of success was almost hopeless, yet his opportunities of seeing his fair cousin were as constant as ever; Lord Fontenoy being under the necessity of looking much after his property in Ireland, was a great deal absent from his mistress, and Lord Milbank had therefore got into the habit of forgetting his engagement, till painfully reminded of it, by seeing him, as at present, seated by her side with the easy, happy air of an accepted suitor.

This was the first evening at Rosmoor Hall which Arthur had found dull. Indeed, to him the whole charm had ever rested with Lady Clara; without her to observe and converse with, he felt isolated and unhappy. Music was the order of the evening, for which St. Clair cared

not: the Miss Thrushes sang trios, and Miss Trevor gave a scene from Medea, *à la Pasta*, "*Mai piu*," *à la Veluti*, and a ballad according to Madame Vestris, winding up with "Home, sweet home." Lady Clara sat good-naturedly by the singers, to give them consequence, not in the ears, but in the eyes of the society, and affected to interest herself about the performance. Lord Fontenoy sauntered about, yawned, looked bored, and, after trying half the chairs in the room, settled himself to sleep in a remote corner. St. Clair played at *écarté* with Lord Milbank till the hour of the night enabled him to make his bow and return to his barracks.

The attraction to a ball, which had been looked forward to with anything but indifference, ceased after Lord Fontenoy's arrival. To dance and converse with Lady Clara was all the pleasure St. Clair had anticipated therein, and all he wished to enjoy: now, of course, Lord Fontenoy's attentions would preclude those of every one else, even in the most humble form.

The day of the ball arrived, and, as he expected, on entering the room the first persons who met his glance were Lord Fontenoy and his des-

tined bride, advancing hand in hand in a quadrille, all eyes turned upon them.

"Well, if that pair be as well matched in mind as they are in body, they will be a very fortunate couple," observed an old lady, looking towards the dancers, to another antiquated dame near Arthur.

"It does one's eyes good to look at anything so handsome now-a-days, when beauty is not so common as it was in our time, Mrs. Cobweb,—there is a sad change in that respect."

"And in every other," groaned Mrs. Cobweb.

"Ay, too true! too true!—if the youngsters of these days could see the youth of our time—Sir Antinous Lovely or Captain Belvedere, for instance—they would be astonished indeed."

"They were great beauties of yours, I well remember," answered Mrs. Cobweb shortly; "but the year of their renown I was a little fastidious in my taste; my poor dear Admiral Cobweb had indulged me with a trip to town, and I——"

"Oh! I remember well," interrupted the first speaker, in evident dismay at the mention of a trip to the metropolis, which, for forty years since, had been daily mentioned by the indefatigable

Mrs. Cobweb to her more fatigued friends,—" I remember all about that excursion; it was but yesterday you were telling me how the Prince of Wales danced a minuet with the Duchess of Devonshire at some great ball—and all about his good looks."

" Ah! he *was* a beauty indeed!" said Mrs. Cobweb, with a pensive air and sentimental sigh.

" Beauty is but a fading flower, as his has proved, if all they say be truth, whilst Captain Belvedere is a perfect evergreen."

" Lord! Mrs. M'Adams, how can you say so?"

" Indeed, my good friend, you may well ask; for I think it is rather an offence to the captain to draw any comparison;—he, the most sprightly man still of the town, as active as a man of thirty, who wears his own hair and cuts his own joke like a sprightly lad. His Majesty, I fear me, is in a very different plight."

" Bless me! Mrs. M'Adam, it is well no one hears you but myself—you are talking high treason."

" I!" screamed Mrs. M'Adams; but St. Clair had no time to listen to her defence of the serious

charge brought against her. The dance over, Lord Fontenoy led his partner to a seat and retired, leaving a vacant place by her side. Into that chair Arthur darted with an alertness that was rarely exhibited in his movements.

"I had never expected to approach you to-night," said St. Clair.

"What! you imagined my lord would have kept guard all the evening;—that would have been a trial of patience indeed."

"For you, or for him?" inquired St. Clair.

"Not for me; I care not how much he is with me: my misfortune is, that as my uncle's invitations are as rare, and for as short a period as possible, under existing circumstances I see far too little of Lord Fontenoy. But men are so different, particularly Englishmen. An Italian, situated as he now is, would stand behind my chair all night with my shawl on his arm, and let me talk with every one I chose without offence or fatigue: he would be my slave, or I his divinity. Such devotion forms no part of a sturdy Britain's creed; in his eyes, indeed, it is almost heresy and an infringement of the second commandment."

St. Clair laughed. "I begin to think you

have rather a partiality for foreign manners, and that those four years in Italy have made a stronger impression upon you than you are willing to allow."

"No," replied Lady Clara gravely; "Italy is to me a dream, a beautiful dream. There is *nothing* in England can remind me of that favoured land, which, even in painting, loses its veracity when seen through the light of our misty atmosphere. You will see it some day, — '*La bella Italia!*' — then

'Ne' giorni tuoi felici ricordati di me;'

and of all I have wearied you in repetition of its charms—you will then forgive me." Interrupting herself, she exclaimed, "Ah! there is Fontenoy speaking to Mr. Foster—that dear good man. Do you know, Mr. St. Clair, that when I set up house I am wild to have Mr. Foster as my chaplain."

"That will be very gratifying intelligence to some people; for it is reported that you were rather inclined to encroach upon the chaplain's privilege, and preach yourself."

"Delightful! I know people do say odd things of me; and if there were female clubs, I should

certainly be black-balled by all, for I have some fault, real or imaginary, to meet every one's distaste; being a compound, in the opinions of this discerning neighbourhood, of methodism, blueism, impropriety, impatience, folly, and premature wisdom! which nauseous mixture poor Lord Fontenoy is about to swallow, much to the astonishment of all the tabbies of the town of Dartmore; but, contrary to the general idea with regard to medicine, I hear that Lady Martin Thrush expects that *I* am to be benefited, instead of Lord Fontenoy."

"Would you think me very impertinent were I to say that I thought it very possible?"

"What! do you join in the chorus of Thrushes?"

"No, no, no; I think you perfect, or nearly so; but the fairest casket may contain some few imperfections. You are not a woman to love tamely; your husband will be everything to you; engrossed by him, all the blueism, methodism, &c. will merge into the tender, devoted——"

"Oh, prithee, not—humble wife, I beg," interrupted Lady Clara; "you may say anything else. But I am about to disarm and silence you at once, by confessing that what you expect is very possi-

ble. The tranquillity of Lord Fontenoy's disposition will soften the asperities of mine,—that is, if he should wish to round off the sharp edges of my character, and I should peradventure wish to please him by lending a willing mind to the operation; but, though reformed, I may not be improved, as perhaps you may yourself think when you greet me as a wife. But, however, there is a good year of independence yet to come. In the mean time, Mr. St. Clair, you must take me as I am, and not view my faults through a magnifying glass."

"I could not well discover them without," said Arthur honestly.

"Indeed!" Lady Clara laughed and blushed. "Then why have you blamed me?"

"Blame you!—I could not be so presumptuous:—it was not blame to say that love for your husband would one day be the governing principle of your life."

"It may be so;" and Lady Clara sighed.

"Why do you sigh?"

"Because, paradoxical as it may seem, I have seen those whom love has rendered selfish, foolish, useless, and unfriendly. God preserve me from

such a metamorphosis, even for such as Fontenoy !"

Lady Clara was silent ; Lord Fontenoy drew near with a smile of such conscious welcome as to make Arthur start from his chair, into which, even before he offered it, his lordship had sunk. The colour flew to St. Clair's face, and making a hasty retreat to the other end of the room, he approached Lady Clara no more that evening.

A very short time after this ball, the intelligence was communicated to Arthur St. Clair, that through the influence of Sir William Crawford he had obtained a company in a regiment quartered at Malta. Such promotion was very agreeable to Arthur, and not the less so as it afforded him an opportunity of visiting foreign lands ; but the new thoughts it inspired did not make him take less interest in what was passing at Rosmoor, and whilst he continued at Dartmore, he contrived to pay a visit most days there, or to fall in with Lady Clara in her rides. At such times she was as often alone as attended by Lord Fontenoy ; — his lordship had a great taste for fishing, and in this sport frequently spent his mornings. With this gentleman St. Clair's acquaintance made little pro-

gress:—common report announced him as good-tempered and well-educated; but whether common report was right or wrong, Arthur had no opportunity of ascertaining. Though an earl, he was extremely poor; a small estate in Ireland, on which stood a most disproportionate castle, was the extent of his present property. Once, however, the territory was more in character with the habitation; but each possessor had acted upon the system of bequeathing to his successor the property reft of some hundreds of acres, which acres they had appropriated to their own exigencies in the hour of need. A plan so sensible Lord Fontenoy's father had worthily availed himself of,—and a park, garden, and a few farms were the sad remnants of the ancient family estate to which the present lord succeeded at his death.

Lord Fontenoy's poverty was well known: it was precisely a cause to interest Lady Clara—an interest which did not diminish when chance brought them acquainted. In Lord Fontenoy reigned the utmost perfection of beauty,—to an extent which seemed to annihilate every other consideration in looking at him: no thought, when first he appeared, ever obtruded as to whether so fair a casket con-

tained as fair a mind; it was sufficient that he was handsome, and that in the eyes of the most cunning critic his person was faultless. His exquisitely-formed features were precisely those Canova would have loved to pourtray—the curling short upper lip, rounded chin, oval face, and Grecian nose: the very defect in his face was that which all lovers of the antique as well as of modern statuary must accommodate themselves to—the want of expression. Lord Fontenoy could boast no more living light, to all appearance, in those orbs of intelligence, the eyes, than had they been of marble; they were small, colourless, and lacked mind: but, where all around besides was perfect, this fault was not readily discoverable. His voice was gentle, and, proceeding from such lips, to every young female ear was the voice of interest and persuasion. Men judged differently, and some women thought it had a fault—monotony. Alas! it was not in the monotony of the voice, but in the ideas, where the imperfection lay.

It is not extraordinary that Lady Clara's youthful heart should have been soon won by the attentions of such as Lord Fontenoy. Before she knew him, he had excited her interest,—and when

seen, her admiration :—love soon followed, and imagination cannot picture a moment of more exquisite bliss, than when she heard from his lips a declaration of his passion, and, in his most soft accents, a supplication to look favourably on his suit by accepting his hand.

Coquetry formed no part of Lady Clara's character: that fault belongs not to the country where she had been chiefly educated; to more northern lands must the credit be given of having brought to perfection a character worthy of their cold clime. The Southerns, with all their imperfections, numerous as they may be, have not to answer for the *coquette*. Lord Fontenoy had not to suffer the torture of suspense; his hand was accepted with all the sincerity of youth, her regard confessed, and Lord Rosmoor consulted. Never was astonishment greater than his. He was very little acquainted himself with Lord Fontenoy; in fact, it was in the hunting-field that his ward's partiality for him had been gendered, and cultivated. He had not the most remote idea that Lady Clara thought of marriage; and whenever she should do so, he had firmly established in his own mind that his son was to be the object of her choice. The

mist was removed, and at one fell swoop all his fair visions vanished! He opened his eyes upon a foxhunter! a man of trespasses and destruction! as one who would stalk *en roi* over Lady Clara's broad lands, with all her broad pieces in his purse! Lord Rosmoor was as bitterly disappointed as a man could be who made it a rule not to fret about anything but his game-preserves; this mischance therefore did not embitter many days or hours of his life—he gave his unwilling consent, as has already been shown,—on the condition that the marriage should not take place for two years, and dismissed the subject from his mind.

CHAPTER X.

The day preceding that on which Arthur St. Clair was to depart, he turned his horse's head towards Rosmoor Hall. "I am going to leave my p. p. c. with the earl," he said to an officer whom he met on the road; which simple observation was not precisely the fact, the object of St. Clair being to see and take leave of Lady Clara. As he rode towards the house, he observed Lord Fontenoy descend its steps, and take the direction of the stables. "So much the better," thought St. Clair; and for fear his lorship's civility might induce him, at the sight of himself, to return into the house, and thus be deprived of his projected ride, Arthur guided his horse beneath some wide-spreading trees, where he remained quietly hidden till his lordship was fairly lodged within the stable-walls. He then came forward, and heard from the footman at the door that all the gentlemen

were gone out, but that Lady Clara was within. Into the library accordingly Mr. St. Clair was shown, where he found Lady Clara occupied with a book, and Miss Trevor by her embroidery.

"This is charming!" exclaimed the latter young lady at the sight of Arthur, with whom she had a very slight acquaintance, but who, in the simple vanity of her heart, she little doubted had come purposely to pay her a visit,—"this is quite delightful! at last I have got somebody to talk to. Now, Clara, you may read your book as much as you like."

Lady Clara smiled archly in reply, with a slight glance towards Arthur, to see how such an arrangement would suit him.

"Thank you, Lucy, for the permission, but I cannot read when conversation is going on around me; so if I am to continue my book, you must remain silent, which would be rather hard towards Mr. St. Clair, little as he may deem talking necessary to conversation."

"Am I so absurd?"

"Not absurd—only taciturn; but you are an admirable listener."

"Now, would you believe it, Mr. St. Clair?"

exclaimed Miss Trevor, "Clara has said more during the last five minutes than she has uttered since breakfast. Here have I been seated, trying to get a word from her of the opera, the neighbours, cross-stitch, tent-stitch, her rides, and her walks, without extracting one little syllable."

"The delinquent is Walter Scott; if he will write such books as Ivanhoe, Lucy Trevor's words must fall unheeded by me; so I humbly beg to be excused for my fault."

"I never read Ivanhoe," said Lucy, with as satisfied an air as if she had pronounced her ignorance of 'Tom Paine's Rights of Man;'—"did you, Mr. St. Clair?"

"Five times," was the laconic reply.

"You must have been terribly at a loss for books then, I should imagine.—Five times! how strange!"

Lady Clara now put in an explanatory word. "Mr. St. Clair does not mean that when he reached the last word of the book, he turned again to the beginning of the first chapter, and so on for five successive times; but that, since its publication, he has found pleasure in several renewed perusals of the work. This matter settled, now tell me,

Mr. St. Clair — but I see it in your countenance —you are come to take leave."

" I am glad that my air denotes my object, for then I must have a more expressive countenance than I usually have had credit for; and my taciturnity may be at present indulged if my face betrays the sorrow I feel."

" Sorrow! No, no, no, — the air I would describe is very different: your step on entering was more assured than usual, your bow rather more condescending, and a little importance of air pervaded your whole person — denoting a man about to depart, with your ideas as free as your person is about to be; and the longer such travels are likely to last, the more exalted does the person become: therefore, with the prospect of the journey and voyage to Malta before your eyes, you have it written on every line of your face — your first entrance told me everything: ' Here I am, Lady Clara, about to quit the dull home-scene you are doomed to tread; — poor thing! how I pity you, and how you must envy me!' "

How Arthur might have answered this raillery was doubtful; happily, he had time to collect his thoughts, by Miss Trevor taking the advantage of

a moment's pause, to put in her word, as it is vulgarly called, and she exclaimed !—

" La, Clara, what a quizzer you are ! If I was you, Mr. St. Clair, I should be quite affronted."

But Miss Trevor knew not that it was impossible for Lady Clara to affront Mr. St. Clair, who, drawing his chair nearer to Lady Clara, begged her to define still further the air of a man about to travel.

" Definition sounds sadly Johnsonian : I am unfortunately not of his school as to language."

" Oh ! as to Johnson, he has said that the greatest pleasure in life is travelling in a post-chaise and four : no compliment could be greater, or definition more decisive. But it is *your* definition I want."

" Well, then, it is the prospect of this greatest pleasure in life, or of a much more humble mode of locomotion, which induces the man who departs to assume an air of superiority over those whom he quits. His grief is less boisterous, his adieus more composed, his compliments shorter, and his whole manner glossed over by a self-satisfied air which those that remain presume not to dispute. He springs lightly on his horse, or

scrambles to the top of a mail-coach, giving smiles for sighs, and with a protecting nod vanishes from the sight of his sorrowing friends, who with rather a crest-fallen air witness his departure. But such as I have described are the least important of the class of travellers, though perhaps not the least happy. Still, they are many degrees removed from his lordship stepping into his silk-lined, double-springed travelling chaise — his valet behind, and four rapid posters in front. Here may be seen the acme of travelling importance, or rather pomposity, which lasts beyond the door from whence he starts, and accompanies the traveller the whole length of the road, from staring villages to cringing innkeepers, and does not quite abandon him in the equalizing streets of London. Four horses are wonderfully attractive in the eyes of Englishmen !— tired, dirty, raw-boned, as they may be, still they have honour due ; and he who owns or pays them, arriving amidst the splendid equipages even of Hyde Park, when that popular drive is at the zenith of its glory, about the time of half-past five or later——"

A violent yawn from Miss Trevor was at this

moment too audible to be unnoticed. Lady Clara laughed.

"My dear Lucy, you see my conversation is more fatiguing than my silence."

"I hate prosing," observed Lucy, moving towards the conservatory.

"So do I," answered Clara; "and if guilty, I ask pardon of the company."

Miss Trevor sauntered on without making any reply. This lady's character was not an uncommon one, for such may be met with in every society. With her own sex she could be natural, if not agreeable, — most particularly so if there was no question of a man in the house or the country; but woe betide Dame Nature, and every other female friend, if one of the nobler sex appeared!—from that moment were they as dross in the eyes of the fair Lucy. A compliment to the wearer of a coat she was not backward in demonstrating, and which, as she was a pretty girl, I am bound to say she often found her account in: but if she did not,—if, as in the present instance, the man presumed to discover she was not the only woman in the society,—a fit of *ennui* was sure to ensue, the more over-

powering the greater attention paid elsewhere; most particularly if, as in Lady Clara's case, the purloiner of that good, a man, was a *fiancée!* —a situation which should leave every male from the sexagenarian to the stripling, excepting her lover, at the full command of such as Miss Trevor;—at least so Miss Trevor thought; and her sense of the want of courtesy on her cousin's part in not acting up to so evident a duty, she resentfully showed by abruptly leaving the room — the very step most desirable in St. Clair's eyes.

The subject of travelling exhausted, Arthur inquired where Lord Fontenoy was gone?

Clara replied, he was fishing, she believed.

"When I return to England, Lady Clara, you will be a wife."

"And you, possibly, a husband."

Arthur shook his head. "I am too poor to marry."

"And I too rich."

"What mean you?"

"Why, simply that the love of ten thousand a year might as easily make me obtain a husband as love for Clara."

"Men are not so sordid, believe me."

"Is it so? But, do you know, within these few days I have begun to think more seriously of marriage than I ever did before. If"—and Lady Clara looked earnestly at St. Clair—"if I should be disappointed, deceived—and how many women have been!"

"One thing you cannot be mistaken in—Lord Fontenoy's beauty."

"No, nor his general character—every one speaks well of him." Then with a sigh she added, —"I was so resolved to have my way, that I accepted Lord Fontenoy after a very short acquaintance, and at that time I really knew nothing of him, in love as I was, but his good looks and good horsemanship."

"There is one thing as regards marriage which is certain,—it is not the longest acquaintance who are the happiest when united. A great many French marriages, so repugnant to our notions of freedom, are extremely fortunate. However well you may imagine you know a person's character, how much is there yet to learn when you come to live with them entirely! Every little trait, which in the aggregate makes the sum total of domestic

bliss or misery, is then first brought forth to view, eclipsing the more prominent qualities, which were the original attraction. In starting, you will be secure of three things,—Lord Fontenoy's beauty, his good temper, and your large fortune; whilst many embark every day secure of nothing but love—the most evanescent of all passions."

Lady Clara sighed; she seemed about to speak, but at that moment Miss Trevor appeared at the window, which throwing open wide, she proceeded to inform her cousin that the day was far too fine to be wasted at home.

"Wasted!" exclaimed Clara—"what an English idea! Time may be wasted in walking, riding, or driving,—but not in agreeable society, reading, painting, or music. However, Lucy, I will join you soon; but remember, in my code, we walk for pleasure, stay at home for profit."

The apparition of Miss Trevor brought Arthur's visit to a conclusion.

"Promise me," said Lady Clara, "that I shall be the first person you visit on your return to England."

St. Clair most willingly promised. Shortly after, he took leave.

"If Lady Clara's theory be correct," thought Arthur, as he pensively pursued his way towards Dartmore, "I, as the one to depart, feel less than she who remains. Were, then, our feelings equal, heavy indeed would be your heart, Lady Clara!—but they are, perhaps I should say happily, very dissimilar; and your theories were only true with respect to *mutual* regards, and your heart is at this moment buoyant as ever, though

'Fancy——
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,'

would lead me to believe that the tears trembled in your eyes as you bade me farewell. It must have been fancy——yet——"

CHAPTER XI.

Most of the officers of the regiment having wives and families out with them, had no wish to move; leave of absence was therefore not difficult to obtain, and about six months after Arthur St. Clair landed at Malta, he reembarked for Naples in order to make the tour of Italy.

It has been well observed by a writer of the present day, *—"The beauty of the bay of Naples would be unimpaired were desolation and solitude to extend over all its shores: you might destroy its proud city, its villas, its hoary fortresses and mountain monasteries,—you might burn every tree, root and branch,—and still the picture would remain lovely and sublime. The fortuitous course of human events can do nothing on that glorious outline—on that assemblage of mountain, hill, vale, dell, and sea: it cannot obscure the lifefulness, the brilliancy, the transpa-

* Macfarlane's Constantinople.

rency of that sky, which, I feel convinced, is such a one as must canopy the blessed in an immortal world."

It was in this earthly paradise that Arthur landed one fair evening in that delightful Neapolitan month of February. It is not intended here to describe Naples or Italy; not, however, for the same reason precisely that so many people are silent — the subject being *hackneyed.* Most true is it that the press has groaned for years with "Tours in Italy," "Letters from Italy," "Residences," &c. &c.—but they do not fully describe that singular country; nor can they. All persons in visiting Italy find that their conceptions have been often misled by what they have read; but if they attempted to embody their own feelings and observations in writing, they would probably, in their turn, lead others as much in error. It is strange to say, there is still so much left untold. Only one traveller* has really described Rome, and has given three volumes where others usually give three chapters. Naples requires as intelligent a pen, and is as interesting and fertile a subject. It is as classic ground, and

* Rome in the Nineteenth Century.

in wonders of art only second to Rome itself, whilst in wonders of nature how far superior! And yet the fire-side traveller thinks of it only as a luxurious capital, where the pulmonary invalid may foster his health, and the idle sensualist waste his existence; where there is a race of beings called Lazzaroni, whose appellation, in ignorance perhaps, he imagines is derived from their being *lazy*—not aware that they are the most hard-working of the Neapolitan population, —and where it is supposed maccaroni is the chief food, and boating the greatest amusement. To contradict these fables, and many others of a similar nature with regard to Italy in general, is not the present object: flashes of truth, however, it must be observed, have occasionally burst through the veil of error; and there are opinions and facts mentioned in Lord Byron's letters, which, though only relating to an obscure corner of that country, it would be well to read and remember, previously to deciding upon the moral and political state of Italy at large.

Until the peace, many of our ideas as to that country were drawn from the fanciful pages of her who called her most beautiful novel "Italy,"

and described her heroine as all feeling, talent, morality, and sentiment! Captivating as this character might be, the author was as much mistaken in supposing it Italian, as she was in imagining her fair heroine to have seen her lover's face reflected in the troubled waters of the "Fontana di Trevi;" or, whilst exposed to the heat of a burning sun, to have run from her house at Naples to Portici in pursuit of that lover, who, to calm his agitated feelings, had there sauntered for a little refreshment! the distance being some five or six miles! One more observation must conclude this digression. It is the eternal repetition of travellers — their all dwelling on the same subject, as if, like the reporters of debates, they had made use of the same notes,—that makes Italy to be considered an exhausted subject. Readers are surfeited with accounts of St. Peter's, and hardly know that the galleries of the Vatican exist: they could draw you the exact resemblance of Trajan's pillar, but are probably ignorant that the most wondrous specimens of antiquity Rome contains are of Egyptian origin, and its greatest ornament for eye to gaze at, and mind to moralise upon, are its obelisks! They know by heart the

contents of the Florentine Gallery, but have yet to form acquaintance with the Studio at Naples, that emporium of ancient lore, which it would require almost a life to appreciate properly. All, therefore, who have a desire to see, and power to move, should judge of Italy for themselves in early youth, so as to lay up a store of pleasing recollections and wholesome knowledge to feast their declining years upon, till such time as,

"In second childishness and mere oblivion,"

age, as a prelude to a new state of being, gradually expunges from the mind the feelings and tastes which gave the charm to this.

Arthur St. Clair was for some time a solitary, though not disconsolate individual, in the crowds of Naples; for, when alone, he could view everything it contained with more satisfaction to himself than if in society. Upon arriving, however, at the small and romantic town of Salerno, on an excursion to Pæstum, he there found a native of his own country bent upon the same object; and a difficulty arising as to procuring a separate conveyance, they agreed to proceed together to those celebrated ruins.

Sir Charles Maxwell, for such was his new

acquaintance's name, proved intelligent, well-bred, and agreeable; his conversation enlivened the long and otherwise tedious drive; and on their return to the "Speranza" they were so pleased with each other's society, that they agreed to combine their two bad dinners; an advantage much in St. Clair's favour, as the baronet, who was perhaps some twenty-five years his senior, had provided himself on leaving Naples with some excellent Marsala wine, which qualified in a measure the food they were doomed to swallow, and perhaps rendered them less observant of the dirt with which they were surrounded.

The opinion which Arthur had formed of his companion was fully confirmed by subsequent conversation; and the wretched appearance of the beds allotted to them being no great inducement to seek repose, it was not till a late hour that the new acquaintance separated, each evidently very well satisfied with the other. The baronet had seen much of the world, and knew it in all its forms, fair and foul; had travelled and read considerably; he had also served; and it needed not great penetration to discover that, whatever his present means might be,

poverty and himself had once been nearly allied. His opinions were shrewd, but often bitter; and his universal information, evidently the result of experience and observation, as well as of early instruction, was not learned in the school of wealth and independence.

Sir Charles Maxwell's story was one of hundreds: A younger son, brought up with the first in the land at a public school, and with all the habits of expense contracted at Eton and in a luxurious home, hurried into the army and to India. There, unable to practise a lesson he had never even heard named "to ears polite," economy, he fell into debt. His father, however, was rich and indulgent; so he stated the simple case in his letters to England, and during the year that elapsed before the answer arrived, he more than trebled his debt and fell in love! The answer arrived: it contained half the remittance demanded; but, as a counterpoise to such parsimony, there was more than a full measure of anger, advice, threats, and *no* promises. For the first time Charles Maxwell was informed that, as a younger son, he was entitled to nothing; that his commission was as much as he had any

fair right to expect; that his pay was his income, his quarters his home, &c. Desperately in love, and actually the accepted lover of one of the prettiest girls in India—her father a man holding a high civil station, perfectly satisfied with the expectation young Maxwell held out of his father being able to provide for them, and giving every encouragement to the deeply-enamoured pair,—what a direful blow was this letter! So far from any hope remaining that his parents would assist him in his love, they evidently cared little to extricate him from difficulties where his honour was concerned. The whole of this dreadful truth was obliged to be revealed to the father of his actually affianced bride. Of course such a disclosure could lead but to one event—the breaking off the marriage. It could not be otherwise; but the affections of the lovers were too far engaged to be as readily severed.

"To a man," says a living writer, * "the disappointment of love may occasion some bitter pangs: it wounds some feelings of tenderness; it blasts some prospects of felicity; but he is an active being—he can dissipate his thoughts in the

* Washington Irving.

whirl of varied occupation, or can plunge into the tide of pleasure ; or if the scene of disappointment be too full of painful associations, he can shift his abode at will, and taking, as it were, the wings of the morning, can ' fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, and be at rest.' But woman's is comparatively a fixed, a secluded, and a meditative life. She is more the companion of her own thoughts and feelings ; and if they are turned to ministers of sorrow, where shall she look for consolation ? Her lot is to be wooed and won ; and if unhappy in her love, her heart is like some fortress that has been captured, and sacked, abandoned, and left desolate."

Such was, alas ! too truly, the case with the fair being whom Charles Maxwell loved, and such a state could only lead to one melancholy result—*a broken heart !*

Maxwell returned to England. He was received coldly by his family : they regarded him as a spendthrift, and openly ridiculed his presumption to have thought of marrying ; and even when tidings arrived that the object of his affections was no more, they, by way of consoling him in his affliction, still continued their animadversions

on the folly of beggars presuming to love; adding openly their opinion of its being just as well as it was! "It was for his good; she was well out of the way."

Disheartened and unhappy, he exchanged into a regiment in America, where he remained some years. Though slowly, promotion came at last, and with it change of scene. Shortly after his arrival in the Peninsula, Maxwell was recalled to England; two of his brothers, who intervened between his eldest brother and himself being dead, his father, old and disappointed in his eldest son, now bethought him of his neglected younger one, and accordingly, summoning him home, discharged those debts which for years had been poison to that son's comforts, whilst the paying interest for them had been absolute ruin.

Once more he was free; and as Fortune rarely bestows her favours single-handed, the death of his eldest brother soon followed, whom his father did not long survive; and at fifty years of age, disgusted with the world, disappointed in his affections, without tie, and so much accustomed to privation that wealth was become indifferent to him, he found himself

possessed of a title, and an annual income, of which to have commanded the twentieth part as many years before, would have rendered him happy and respectable, and have retained in the world a fair and gentle being whose early promise was so soon cut off! Such was Sir Charles Maxwell's tale. He was now abroad to pass the time, and partly to be with a friend who was travelling for his daughter's health. "Lord Monckton," said Sir Charles to Arthur, "I have known from my earliest boyhood: his estate joins mine, and consequently, since I have been in possession of it, I have seen much of him. We are very different, but yet I like him better than any one I am acquainted with; in fact, so much so, that to be of service to him, for he was never before out of England, I accompanied him here. He is a tory, full of family pride, and prejudiced beyond measure; but, withal, his toryism is so evidently only a part of that same spirit which rendered his very early ancestors chivalrous, and their descendants cavaliers; and his family pride is so much more connected with noble deeds than with noble names; and his prejudices, rooted as they may be, are so harmless, and sometimes so amusing, that I should

be almost sorry to see them eradicated. Once awakened, he would be deserving of pity; but, as it is, a happy delusion makes him believe that selfishness is not universal, and that noble-mindedness is the common attribute of ancient blood, and perhaps beauty also, he himself being still extremely handsome. He imagines knaves are only to be found in St. Giles's, or amongst radicals; and whigs he only designates as fools, (being as yet ignorant that I intend to support the liberal candidate at the next election,) professing to judge of them by their deeds,—and, I must candidly confess, not without reason, for their acts display, as often as not, proofs of folly, which their words and known good intentions give one no reason to expect; a paradox beyond my power to solve."

In the course of a few days after his return to Naples, Sir Charles Maxwell introduced Arthur to Lord Monckton. His lordship received Mr. St. Clair with evident cordiality; a cordiality which, from the character he had heard given of him, the latter attributed chiefly to the fair sounding name he bore. His surmise was somewhat confirmed by Lord Monckton beginning, as he supposed, the most gratifying subject for the scion of a noble

house to attend to,—an *éloge* upon him who was at the head of that house.

"I have not the pleasure of Lord St. Clair's acquaintance, but I have seen him: he is still a fine-looking man, and bears the stamp of noble blood. Jean de St. Clerc, who followed Richard Cœur-de-Lion to the holy wars, would not blush to see the present possessor of the family honours."

Whatever Jean might have done, it is vain to inquire; but we believe Arthur's honest cheek betrayed a slight tinge at an encomium as unlooked for, as, if truth must be told, undeserved. Lord Monckton continued—

"Your uncle is staunch to the politics of his family—a tory from principle as well as descent. The hospitality of St. Clair Abbey is proverbial—quite of the olden time. Your politics I need not question: with my friend Maxwell there I have my occasional misgivings, but with you I need have no scruple in acknowledging my profession of faith."

Maxwell laughed.

"Indeed," replied St. Clair, "no one need have scruples in professing his opinions before

me, or to me, for my ideas upon politics are so vague, so much more depending upon measures than men, that I fear I am in that odious predicament for an Englishman, the having no political opinions at all. Though, after all, I know not why I should say *fear;* for as a soldier and a younger son, without a voice in the senate, or the means to enable me to command one, my creed could only be for my private edification or satisfaction—an affair which is between my conscience and myself, and wholly uninteresting to others."

"I believe," replied Lord Monckton, "it is imagined soldiers are better without opinions on politics; although, in my estimation, the pure toryism of a Falkland, a Strafford, and a Capel, forms a beautiful adjunct to the noble bearing of a high-spirited soldier—all that now remains in later times as a semblance of those past; times which though, I fear, it is childish alluding to, yet I look back upon with a veneration that will make you smile, when I confess them to be the days of chivalry."

Arthur St. Clair had been a great reader of the ancient chronicles, and, when exalted by the pages of Froissart, had often heaved a sigh at the

unromantic days wherein his lot was cast; he was not therefore inclined to ridicule the peer's opinions, and expressed, in return, his admiration of that golden age with an enthusiasm better adapted to his youthful brow than to the wrinkled forehead of the old baron, shaded, in defiance of fashion, with hair profusely powdered. The conversation soon afterwards turned upon military matters.

"With your uncle's interest," said Lord Monckton, "you will advance rapidly in your profession."

"It is not to Lord St. Clair that I am indebted for the commission I hold."

"Ah! you have other friends?"

"Sir William Crawford was my father's friend; he has influence at the Horse Guards, and through his interest, with the remembrances of my father's services and death, my commission was given me."

"Who is Sir William Crawford?—Scotch, I suppose?"

"Very possibly," replied Arthur; "but his property is in Hertfordshire."

"He is an honest man, in an age when such are rare," observed Sir Charles Maxwell.

"He is a most excellent man indeed, and I have every reason to admire and love him."

St. Clair paused, — not knowing whether he should be justified in explaining the particular reason he had for praising him, but at the same time wishing his auditors could be acquainted with it. However, whilst he thought thereon, the conversation turned to other topics. The fact was, Sir William Crawford had insisted upon St. Clair stating to him, before he left England, the exact amount of his debts, and of his funds for discharging them; and finding that he did not possess sufficient for their immediate payment, he presented him with the money, playfully desiring, in the note that accompanied the gift, that he would repay him when commander-in-chief in India.

The friendship between Lord Monckton and Sir Charles Maxwell was something of an enigma to St. Clair, notwithstanding the explanation of the baronet. It was evident that for him the smiles of Fortune had come too late to mollify a character formed beneath her frowns. No genial showers or brilliant sun can restore to its bloom the tree once blighted: existence may

be retained, but never in future can it vie with its more fortunate companions of the forest who have stood unscathed through storms or cold. Sir Charles was rough, independent, somewhat sarcastic, and with a slight tinge of that sort of liberalism called in England radicalism; and, from long habits of poverty, a despiser of those who are termed 'Fortune's favourites;' — still, to Lord Monckton he would so far lay aside his natural character as to listen complacently to all his theories respecting family and blood. There were moments when Arthur imagined the baron's daughter to be the attraction to the baron's society, and the cause of the restraint put upon the baronet's opinions before him; but he saw no other reason for such a supposition.

Miss Fitz-Norman might be about twenty-five; her health was delicate, and her person, strictly speaking, plain. Still she did possess the small well-shaped head, and delicate hands and feet, of a thorough-bred dame; and her father would not have exchanged such tokens of high descent for all the majesty of a Siddons, or the ruddy beauty of *la belle batelière*.

Without these advantages, Blanche would only have been a very ordinary woman; but with them, she had acquired, in the eyes of many, the title of distinguished,—and of that number Sir Charles might be one. It was possible that he admired Miss Fitz-Norman, and that Lord Monckton should desire the match; but it was much more probable that neither the one nor the other should be the case; and St. Clair was not long in uncertainty, for the affair was elucidated by the baronet himself.

"I would not undeceive Lord Monckton, if I could, of any of his harmless prejudices," he said one day; "they render him happy and annoy no one. I admire his honesty, and, though founded on error, I respect his principles, for their soul is honour. It would fatigue me to meet many such, and the Tories would become dangerous from their respectability if, like him, they were indifferent to self, place, pensions, and power; they would be too powerful a body in support of the crown against the constitution, for in fact such is practically their creed: not that they would confess as much, but their principles spring from that old root which upheld to the last, in

this country, the house of Stuart, and for some time afterwards attempted to keep alive a jacobitical flame, weak and flickering as it was. "Lord Monckton would not willingly injure a worm in his path, and yet, in his heart, he is an advocate for arbitrary power, and, I am sure, considers Louis the Fourteenth to be the most perfect model of sovereignty. However, with all his prejudices, he is a fine fellow, and to live with any other Tory than himself would kill me with rage and bile."

"His daughter, then, has no share in your forbearance with the father? — What think you of Miss Fitz-Norman?" inquired Arthur.

"That she would make you a good wife."

"Make *me* a good wife! I was thinking of yourself."

"I am far too old, and am an inveterate bachelor. You are the person to think of her — not I. Though not rich, you have good blood and a high-sounding name, — are a favourite of Lord Monckton's, and probably of the lady's also, as she sees everything with her father's eyes. A little attention, followed up by a proposal, would put you in possession of fifty thousand pounds."

"And a plain wife."

"Not so plain either — quite well-looking enough for her fortune. What objection have you?"

"A thousand. Putting aside her plainness, I must say that the old peer's prejudices and antiquated notions, when adopted by a young woman, are both unseemly and unattractive. When Miss Fitz-Norman talks politics, she talks nonsense. I have heard her jumble Bonaparte and Robespierre together as persons of the same stamp; and in like manner she confounds the high-minded liberalism of B—— with the unprincipled radicalism of C——, and speaks in the same terms of the revolution of —88 as of the rebellion in Charles the First's time. Such ignorance, for it is beyond prejudice, amounts to wrong-headedness; and of all the heads in the world, that is the one I most abominate."

"Are you sure, St. Clair, that *any* woman possesses what is called a clear head? — I never met with one."

"I *have*," answered St. Clair stoutly.

"Indeed! and where?"

St. Clair coloured and hesitated. Sir Charles,

without appearing to observe his embarrassment, continued, — "As to Miss Fitz-Norman, all that you have said of her is very true; but when she discusses subjects she does not understand, she is only attempting to please her father, by adopting, as she imagines, his opinions and tastes; her motive, therefore, almost cancels her error. I know her to be a most estimable woman; the good she does round Norman Park is incalculable; and though, I grant you, she is not very agreeable, it arises more from want of time than inclination. Fully occupied by laudable pursuits, and satisfied with a most estimable family circle, she has no opportunity to cultivate talents for show and society, and no space in her heart for common acquaintance."

"Or love either, I suspect," answered Arthur. "But, my dear Sir Charles, you have described Miss Fitz-Norman precisely as I should have done myself, — a narrow-minded woman! From such, Heaven preserve me! Her mind is highly cultivated, but only on particular points; all beyond is a barren waste. No, Miss Fitz-Norman is not my sort: she may be an exotic, but I am a flower of the field. I have breathed

the wild air of heaven from my birth,—she only the confined atmosphere of a conservatory, with other plants as tender as herself! Supposing I could marry her, I would not, if it was only for that family egotism which made her the other day, as we were standing in the theatre at Pompeii, suddenly begin a disquisition upon the beauty of the dairy at Norman Park!—and even worse, last night, as from the Santa Lucia we were watching Vesuvius in all its glorious majesty vomiting forth fire and stones, she was full of compassion that I had never seen from the windows at Norman Park the flames of an iron foundery! And it is this same egotism which makes her eternally introduce her family name and tastes, as if every other race were utterly insignificant but the Fitz-Norman, and that 'what they said, ate, drank, wore,' did, or thought, should be the standard for the world at large,—the glass in which we were all to dress ourselves, if we wished to be rendered fit to be seen, heard, or understood."

"I did not imagine, St. Clair, you could have been so severe," said Sir Charles; "and though not very far wrong in your description, yet I forgive the folly for the nature her egotism displays;

—genuine, unsophisticated nature, I, in any form, must ever pardon, however absurd. It is the pride which apes humility that I abhor, as much as they say the devil admires. Miss Fitz-Norman's is very different. Save and deliver me from the pride of our countryman, Mr. Felix Bland! who, before a table groaning beneath all the luxuries wealth can purchase, makes a thousand excuses for the poorness of the fare, and, with every wine from every clime and of every vintage in the room, hopes you have found something you can touch,—and this, as often as not, to persons, as I have frequently witnessed, who, but for the hospitality of their friends, would hardly know the taste of wine, or of other food except, in England, of a tough beef-steak, and in Italy a *fritella*."

CHAPTER XII.

The jingle of bells and cracking of whips gave token of an arrival: and amongst many other heads—we fear most of them English—protruding from the windows of the Vittoria, in order to discover what the fracas below would produce, was that of Arthur St. Clair. As he expected, an English travelling carriage met his eye,—a substantial family coach, behind which sat two green-veiled Dunstable-bonneted abigails, and in front a thin, sharp-looking Italian courier, and a fat, dull, red-faced English footman, with a fierce cockade in his hat. From the interior of the vehicle, after a short parley between the landlord and the courier, there descended a portly middle-aged gentleman, a fat lady, a slim girl with a lap-dog under her arm, and her younger sister with a bird-cage in her hand. Arthur had no time to observe more, as the carriage was in waiting to take him to dinner; but, in descending the stairs,

he had the satisfaction to encounter the whole party.

"Io non sono Milord—io sono Generale—Generale Inglese," said the portly gentleman, in a loud voice and lengthened pronunciation, to the obsequious landlord, as he mounted the stairs to the spot where St. Clair stood to let the family pass. "Sa-pe-te," continued the General, for as such he had announced himself, with all the arrogance of an English manner,—"Sa-pe-te do-ve a-bi-ta il mi-o cu-gi-no—Lord Monckton?"

"Eccelenza, si," replied the landlord, and proceeded with the desired information, as he continued to mount the stairs. The ladies next appeared: the fat lady, groaning and sobbing at the height she had already clambered, and glancing a look of horror at the additional flight of steps her lord and master was already beginning to ascend, exclaimed, "Where can the general be going to? Do call back your papa, children: I will not go and live in the skies again, as we did at Genoa."

"There is no use calling, mamma,—you know well enough papa never minds what we say," answered the young lady of the bird-cage;

whilst she of the lap-dog declared that she liked living at a height.

"Your likes and your dislikes are very strange, Jane. Yesterday you liked being upset —the day before you were sorry at not being robbed."

"Yes, certainly, I was, mamma," replied Jane, with the air of a person whose opinions were the result of reason and reflection: "I should then have been able to judge for myself, and guide the judgment of others, as to the alarm occasioned by a bandit's appearance, and what they really do and say."

"Child, you frighten me to hear you talk;—but, oh! what a horrid smell of garlic comes up these stairs! I must, if possible, escape it. Come, girls; come, Watkins; come, Susan." And the old lady recommenced her ascent, sighing and holding her handkerchief to her nose. The bird-cage girl followed, singing 'I'd be a butterfly;' whilst the other addressed her lap-dog upon the folly of disliking robbers or garlic. The train was far from finished, and St. Clair had to encounter in his descent the two maids, each carrying a small work-basket, followed by a sulky-looking footman

bearing nothing, the courier with a bag of piastres, and half-a-dozen almost naked porters bearing all the general's other valuables, from the five-feet-deep imperial, to the remains of a paper of sandwiches.

At length the party were disposed of, and Arthur escaped to a dinner at Lord Monckton's, to whom he imparted the arrival of his cousin.

Alas, poor human nature! Lord Monckton's aristocratical prejudices were put to a severe trial by the arrival of this his nearest relative.

General Fitz-Norman was not deficient in personal or mental qualifications; but, though handsome, his appearance, even in youth, had been more coarse than attractive; and his sense was a mixture of shrewdness, cunning, and selfishness. He had married, for the sake of her money, a woman of little beauty, no talent, and low birth: by her he had several children besides the two young ladies already named. Though rich, he was ever anxious to save; and what is vulgarly called 'bargaining' was the delight of his life. His constant theme was his poverty,—that little might be expected from him, and in order that he might not, as a younger son, lose all claim upon the elder branch. His manners in society were bad—in his profession

odious. Though generally disliked, yet so callous was he, and so invulnerable to opinions, looks, or even words, that he elbowed his way, by dint of impudence, into military grades of emolument—most carefully eschewing, as far as it was possible, those of danger; and nestled himself into wealthy houses with an assurance only to be equalled by his avoidance of all such where the opposite to wealth was known or suspected. Lord Monckton's understanding he held cheap, but he respected much the length of his purse, in honour of which he made Naples his head-quarters in Italy, understanding his noble relative had done the same. So well aware was his lordship of his cousin's character, that he was grateful beyond measure that in the first instance he had not driven to his house instead of to an hotel, and that the loan of his Opera-box was the only request which accompanied the note announcing his arrival. The next morning, to be sure, produced a demand for the carriage; but that was the result of a night's reflection.

Mrs. Fitz-Norman was a fool, but had just sense enough to conceal her folly under a character, and accordingly adopted that which is better expressed in French than in English—a *frondeur*. Con-

stant dissatisfaction was the part she assumed, and supported, to own the truth, in spite of her folly, with great consistency and some ingenuity. With her own family,—people of no birth and great wealth,—her never-failing topic was the merit of high blood, the insufficiency of money: with her husband's relations, money was everything—people of family, objects of her inveterate dislike. She eulogized wits to fools, and fools to wits; abused the beautiful to beauties, and the plain to the ugly; asked for champagne in houses where such luxury had never been heard of, and refused it with contempt at tables whence it was never absent;—in short, in her way, Mrs. Fitz-Norman was as disagreeable as her husband; and Miss Jane, the only one of the young ladies *out*, a very fair blossom from such a stock.

Such relations put Lord Monckton's family pride and patience to a severe trial, and were really enough, even with the Bay of Naples before his eyes, to give a less nervous man a bilious fever.

In what way Lord Monckton reconciled his aristocratical prejudices to such a scion as General Fitz-Norman, springing from the same stem as himself, no one ventured to inquire. The only

indirect apology for so black a sheep, in so fair a flock, was an occasional opinion which he ventured to suggest of the influence wives always gained over their husbands; and he never knew a low-born, narrow-minded woman, who did not impart some of her under-bred ideas to her partner. Lord Monckton prudently, on such occasions, never mentioned names; so there was neither necessity nor opportunity for any old schoolfellow of the general's to step forward with some Eton anecdote, to show how little the man had belied the boy; or for any military companion to mention his subaltern's character, as moulded in the precise form of the general's.

The duties of relationship Lord Monckton fulfilled with the utmost propriety; and after four wearisome days, devoted to the serious business of acting the cicerone, he formed a dinner and evening party for the general and his family. He desired his daughter to render the *soirée* as gay and as brilliant as she chose; but the dinner consisted only of the Fitz-Normans, five,—St. Clair, Sir Charles Maxwell, an intelligent young man attached to a foreign mission, and an English *savant*, of good appetite, great simplicity, pro-

found reading, deep thought, and almost invariable taciturnity.

The size of the party was evidently offensive to the general, and as he seated himself at table, discovering by a hasty glance that there was no vacant chair, but that all who were expected had arrived, he poured forth his discontent.

"God bless me, Monckton! have you no acquaintance at Naples? I expected half-a-dozen Neapolitan princes and an ambassador or two at least; and here I find a humdrum family party. Why, I have collected more people in London in the month of October than you have assembled here."

"Very possibly, James; your acquaintance was always more general than mine, and, I question not, your hospitality greater;" (Miss Fitz-Norman here smiled;) "but I do not like large dinner-parties, and have few acquaintance amongst the Neapolitan magnates."

"Lord Monckton! and unknown to his equals in rank!—you surprise me. But, what the devil! are we to have nothing to eat?" regarding the table, on which was arranged the dessert.

"Some soup is waiting your orders at your elbow."

"I never touch soup; and I see nothing else to eat but sugared grapes and alabaster cupids."

Lord Monckton quietly sent the bill of fare by his servant to his cousin, who in silence scanned its contents, whilst the soup was vanishing down the throats of the other guests.

As the dinner was being handed round, Miss Fitz-Norman inquired of Sir Charles, who a gentleman of the name of Barnet might be, who was just arrived at Naples. "Is he of the Barnets of Lincolnshire?"

"Quite a different race. He is from the West, and too glad to hide his peculating head and diminished fortune in a foreign land; which latter, I dare say, he hopes to improve by gambling speculations on some of his raw countrymen who are not aware of his former history."

As Sir Charles concluded, Miss Jane inquired, with a visage scarlet from ire, and a voice of authority, what right he had to traduce Mr. Barnet's character? Sir Charles smiled, and informed her that he had been at school with Mr. Barnet, who subsequently had been a defaulter to a large amount. Sir Charles had sprung a mine he was little aware of: Miss Jane had a

passion for argument, or what is vulgarly called holding her own. Having once contradicted the baronet's assertion, she was eager to continue the attack, more particularly as she had formed an acquaintance with the said Barnet, picking violets in the Doria Gardens at Rome; had introduced him to her parents, and was not a little delighted at the soft nothings he had secretly whispered in her ear; which soft nothings, to confess the truth, Miss Jane's want of manners, more than her want of beauty, had rendered of very rare occurrence.

"Mr. Barnet's air alone is enough to stamp him a man who has no cause to shrink from the society of his equals or superiors, countrymen or foreigners. I met him this morning arm-in-arm with a prince, as our lacquey informed us; and he named to me dukes, counts, and other personages of importance, more than I can possibly enumerate or remember, as his friends. Such being the case, I trust, Sir Charles, you will be rather more cautious, *however well informed*, as to what you may imagine Mr. Barnet's history to be."

Sir Charles answered with a polite bow, and turned to attend to Mrs. Fitz-Norman, by whom

he was seated, and who now profited by a moment's pause to open her battery of discontent, which she had kept in reserve since the commencement of dinner.

"How I detest this custom of helping the dishes off the table! a fashion only invented, I believe, that a few may make a greater show. What horridly sour wine! What could possess Lord Monckton to take apartments in this house? it is the most disagreeable in Naples. This dining-room is odious—a mere passage-room to the drawing-room! and such an inconvenient size! How ill Blanche looks! much worse than she did before she left England. And as to Lord Monckton, he is positively twenty years older than when last I saw him. What could induce him to come abroad? He is a regular John Bull! What are they talking of there?—dress—what an odious subject!"

"Indeed, Mrs. Fitz-Norman, I cannot agree with you: I thought Miss Fitz-Norman's description of her Parisian hat was rendered quite interesting in her hands."

"Why, what did she say?"

"You had better not ask," replied her daughter; "for Blanche says it is, *paille de riz*,

with a bunch of lilacs on one side; which is no *Parisian* fashion, I am sure."

"Then where could my bonnet have come from?" inquired Blanche.

"From the Palais Royal, or one of last year's bonnets sold for the English market in the Rue Vivienne."

"Then Mary Dormer must have lost her wits; for she it was who sent it to me."

"She was imposed upon, as all the English are at Paris. I know where to go, I know whom to employ, I know how to talk to the *marchandes de modes;* so my dress may be safely regarded as *French*,—and that is what can be said of few of our countrywomen."

"Then," replied Miss Fitz-Norman, regarding her cousin archly, "if you are right, we must be certainly all wrong."

"And my eyes must be also in fault," said the young *attaché*, scarcely able to conceal a smile, as he glanced his eye over the very worst-dressed woman he had ever beheld; "for when I left Paris, a month since, I had imagined large sleeves and small waists were the *mode*. I now see my error, and am glad to be corrected, though not

for my happiness, as I certainly preferred my *imaginary* fashions to those I now behold."

This and similar discourse occupied the time of dinner. Afterwards a party was assembled, graced by the presence of some of those lovely women with whom Neapolitan society abounds, and whose beauty is so much enhanced by the total absence of affectation. Music having commenced the evening, dancing closed it. Everybody but the general and his family went home satisfied: but they had not been brought forward enough, in their own opinion, by Lord Monckton; the small number of persons to whom they had been introduced would be of little advantage to them in future; Miss Jane Fitz-Norman had not been asked to sing; and Mrs. Fitz-Norman could not call *that* a dance, where the only musical accompaniment they had—beautiful as it was, and afforded with the utmost good-nature—was the performance on a piano, by several of the young Neapolitan men of the party relieving each other. As to the general, he had lost his money at whist, which, as he pronounced himself to be equal to ten foreigners, was extremely annoying, and could only arise from unfair play; a supposi-

tion not very complimentary to the company he had been in, or to the host under whose auspices such company had been assembled.

Arthur St. Clair made but slight progress in his acquaintance with this supplementary batch of Fitz-Normans: they were not persons to suit him in any possible way. And, on their side, having soon discovered that no benevolent uncle or generous godfather had made, or intended to make him an heir, they very judiciously adopted the reserved line as regarded their intercourse; and if they thought of Arthur at all, it was only to express their surprise at his being so much at Lord Monckton's,—most particularly as his intimacy with Miss Fitz-Norman was greatly increased thereby, and its consequences might be terrible, as it could lead to a marriage, and enable her to bestow a fortune where none could be gained in return.

The being deprived of every luxury, and most of the comforts of life, is not the only mischief that the unfortunate poor ones of a race are answerable for: collaterally they are a terrible nuisance in the world, or a family. They do not, indeed, diminish the horses or corn in the stables;

nor do they spirit away the joints of meat from the spit, the *entrées* from the stoves, or the wines from the cellar,—but they do not add thereto: they are negatively bad, they do no good; which is considered by many as doing worse than harm. To be sure, there are people in these liberal days who actually see no reason why poor people should not, with empty purses, and very possibly empty stomachs, laugh as loud as their neighbours—and even, wealthy and prosperous as they may be, at their neighbours,—and, moreover, do not regard poverty as a positive disgrace, only as a misfortune: but these are the liberal few, —the illiberal many judge differently.

But to return from whence this digression sprang. General Fitz-Norman was right: Lord Monckton did encourage Arthur St. Clair's society; and Miss Fitz-Norman regarded it with anything but an evil eye. Some time, however, elapsed before the object of such kindness was aware of their wishes; and when he was, the discovery cost him far more pain than pleasure. If one particle of the leaven of sordidness existed in the composition of Arthur St. Clair, now was the opportunity for it to leaven the whole mass: if his passion for

Lady Clara was only a passing flame, now might he prove it; and if the independence of wealth was the only desirable independence, the trial might now be made,—he had only to lend himself to Lord Monckton's hopes, and those of his daughter. Arthur was not very partial to his profession,—and he was very partial to Lord Monckton. Though not in the least extravagant, his narrow income was as annoying to his generous feelings as such a misfortune is to the generality of the world's selfish ones: to see poverty he could not relieve, was to render him as wretched as the object of distress, and (for we are all egotists in some respect) it required all his philosophy, though no virtuoso, to confine his desires within the compass of his slender means, surrounded as he was by the works of modern and ancient art with which Italy abounds, and which are so industriously displayed in every tempting form before an Englishman's eyes. In marrying Miss Fitz-Norman all such distresses would cease: his philosophy need have no more trials, nor his profession any more calls; the poor would have a benefactor, the arts a patron, and himself an amiable, if not agreeable wife,—one

very willing to be attached to him, if not so already, and very capable of commanding reciprocal affection.

Nevertheless, the question admitted not one moment's doubt in the mind of Arthur; and from whatever cause arising,—either too much love for Clara, or too little love for Blanche, or merely the love of personal independence, which has so much influence over a mind yet new to life—it matters not to inquire,—but shortly after the decided conviction of Lord Monckton's intentions were unveiled to his eyes, he as clearly made known his own by withdrawing himself from Naples. This step was cunningly devised, and as quietly executed; and no adieux were ever more friendly than those of Lord Monckton, his daughter, and Arthur St. Clair.

Whilst St. Clair was so great an object of attention to Lord Monckton, his friend Sir Charles was not less so to the general, who, having ascertained the exact amount of his income, and the precise nature of his property, commenced a regular siege upon his purse and person, assisted by his daughter—the nominal prize by which both were to be secured. Love, positive love, was

made by the lady, and something like it by the father; but, alas! in vain. The sturdy soldier yielded not one step—the fire of Miss Jane's eyes from beneath her crêped curls fell harmless; which was more than could be said of the cordial grasp of the father's hands, which, to poor Sir Charles's gouty members, was a daily inflicted punishment. The general and his daughter, in the vanity of their hearts, nothing doubted but that in time the fortress would surrender at discretion, when, to their utter dismay and most extreme surprise, the unconquered baronet proclaimed the freedom of his heart, as well as person, by announcing his intentions of quitting Naples with Arthur St. Clair.

The travellers departed; and very different were the comments made thereon by the two Fitz-Norman families.

"Well," said Lord Monckton, as, with his cup of tea in one hand and Galignani in the other, he sat with his daughter at breakfast, — "Well, Blanche, we shall miss our friends; that young St. Clair I took a vast fancy to: quiet as he is, he is not unobserving, and can communicate those observations also in an unaffected manner, when properly encouraged. He is not precisely hand-

some, but he has what I like better, *l'air noble ;* he is thoroughly gentleman-like, and far better informed than the generality of our modern youths. What think you, Blanche ?"

" I agree with you perfectly, papa."

" As to Maxwell, he has promised to wait for us at Rome, so we may soon meet again ; but I fear St. Clair will have proceeded to Switzerland. Maxwell is an estimable man, notwithstanding the general's discovery within this day or two—that he is rough and sarcastic. In our journey here, he was ever a most agreeable and intelligent companion. We always found him so, did we not, Blanche ?"

" Yes, papa."

" I am not sorry at leaving Naples, now Maxwell and St. Clair are gone ; our drives will be but dull without them."

" Very true, papa."

" St. Clair was remarkably agreeable in those drives ; did you not think so, Blanche ?"

" I am quite of your opinion, papa."

" I dread, too, Jane Fitz-Norman proposing to occupy with her dog the vacant seats in our carriage."

"Oh, Heaven forbid! papa," exclaimed Blanche, roused to give a more decided opinion; "that would be indeed a cruel change."

"Then, to avoid it, my dear, the sooner we leave Naples the better."

"Certainly, papa."

Whilst this was the discourse at Lord Monckton's breakfast table, the following were the remarks made at that of the general:—

"So the travellers are off," said Mrs. Fitz-Norman, seating herself before the morning meal.

"What travellers?" inquired her husband sharply, knowing perfectly well whom she meant.

"Why, Sir Charles Maxwell and Mr. St. Clair, to be sure, my dear. I saw them depart."

"A very interesting sight," observed Miss Jane with a sneer. "I wonder, ma'am, you did not summon the whole family to have a view also."

"If I had thought of it, I would; for there was plenty of time, as they stopped and had a long parley with that frightful Lord Weston, just opposite the windows. It seemed to be a very tender leave-taking."

"Then I am sure their parting was very different from mine," exclaimed the general. "What

is it to me where they go? To the devil if they like,—I would not prevent them."

"Lord! general, I thought Sir Charles was a great favourite. I was afraid you would regret his society."

"His society—nonsense! He is the dullest fellow living. All I regret is, that he would not buy my Titian; and I believe it was he who made Weston suspect it to be only a copy,—which is a confounded lie,—and so he would have nothing to say to it either; and then, again, that shrewd, sneaking fellow, St. Clair, has carried twenty of my piastres off with him, which he won at *écarté*. When I proposed to him to play, I had no idea he had ever touched a card three times in his life. Monckton has done us no good by introducing us to such people."

"Good, papa!—say rather he has done us injury," sighed Miss Jane, who, in pursuit of Sir Charles, had thought it advisable to drop Mr. Barnet's acquaintance.

"I shall take care in future," continued the general, "how I ask people to dinner,—invite them to my opera-box,—carry them with me to pic-nics, and, in short——get nothing for my pains but a p. p. c. card."

"I thought, Jane," said Miss Mary, a young lady of slender intellect, "that you were to marry Sir Charles?"

"*I* marry Sir Charles!—Mary, you are dreaming."

"Lord! sister, you told me that you should be married in white gros de Naples, with orange flowers in your head, and——"

"Hold your tongue, child!" roared the general, coming to his daughter Jane's assistance, who, white with anger, awaited in trembling some stronger proof from her sister's volubility of her misplaced—not affections, but expectations.

"Hold your tongue!—if Jane has thought of *her* wedding gown, I will be bound to say so have you; and, as to Sir Charles," he added boldly, "I would not upon any account have had such a stupid son-in-law—a man eaten up with the jaundice and gout."

An awful silence ensued after the general's explicit avowal. Miss Jane's self-satisfied mien was restored; but her mother and sister had for some time deep surprise written on their countenances, and concluded their repast with the air of "*Moutons qui rêvent.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

After sojourning a few days at Rome, Arthur St. Clair took leave of his companion, and continued his journey through the north of Italy into Switzerland. Several months passed away during his rambles through that wild and romantic country. In parting with Sir Charles Maxwell, he had promised to meet him again at Rome before Christmas, but in the mean time they had little or no communication. He knew the Moncktons had spent the summer at a villa near Florence, and that General Fitz-Norman had taken shelter from *les grandes chaleurs* among the mountains of Lucca, threatening, however, Lord Monckton with a descent from thence in the autumn to nearer quarters, and of certainly joining him in the winter at Rome.

Early in December, Arthur St. Clair found himself at Milan, and amongst others awaiting

him was the following letter from Sir Charles Maxwell :—

" Rome, November.

" My dear St. Clair,

" I take my chance of this finding you at Milan, as that will probably be your route to the south ; conceiving you still adhere to your intentions of joining the Moncktons and myself this winter at Rome, where, believe me, you are anxiously expected. Such an age has elapsed since hearing from you, that we sometimes dread your having crossed the Jura instead of the Alps, preferring the present to the past—neglecting poor ancient Italy for modern France and England — and for the sake of the land of books, newspapers, cleanliness, politicians, and fires, abandoning that of ignorance, dirt, music, and never-failing enjoyment from a bright sun and classical reminiscences.

" Return to us, I beg. Among various reasons for your so doing, must be urged my wish to see you. I have been very ill,—and, as you know, am no croaker—but I am still ill.

" From whence it proceeds I cannot presume to explain, but in this lovely land there exists a

scourge that we northerns cannot comprehend easily; and to us the fables of the Catholic forms of worship, and the fables of the 'malaria,' seem equally to arise from an overcharged fancy. Alas! whatever the first may be, I have proved unfortunately that the last is no deception. The fairest spots of ground or the most barren—the most elevated or the most lowly, are cursed at periods by the malaria. Poison is in the air, and its every breeze conveys destruction and death! And this, too, often in spots from whence move but a few yards and all is health and safety. I am a soldier, and we are supposed to be predestinarians: some may be so, and acquire their courage from such comfortable belief; but the constant habit of beholding death is a more natural reason—for we all know how little we dread what we are in the constant habit of seeing. I am no coward, and feared the malaria as little as the enemy in battle. Having taken a violent fancy to a particular villa in Rome, I established myself there in the beginning of September, though warned of the badness of the air. For a short time I was quite enchanted with my residence; the peace and beauty of all around

seemed perfect paradise. I was however aroused from my dream by one of my servants being seized by a fever, which was speedily pronounced to be malaria! My remorse was extreme, and before his sufferings had terminated! — alas! fatally — I was myself attacked. I recovered, and became what is termed convalescent, — sufficiently so, as to be removed from my pestilential abode, — and shortly after was pronounced well.

"But start not, St. Clair! Do not think me nervous or mad — I am dying! Dropsical symptoms have appeared within the last fortnight — it is a family disorder. Every hour I feel my strength decreasing; in short, if you wish to see me again, — and most earnestly do I wish to see you, — you must come instantly to Rome. The Moncktons are with me, but they have no idea of my danger; and if they had, would be the last people to be of any use to me beyond compassion — of that there is no doubt. A valetudinarian, like Lord Monckton, who has all his life voted himself an invalid, is the very worst possible attendant upon a *bona fide* sick man. He is so sure one's dinner is to cure one, — or going to bed early, or a glass of orange-flower water, or a warm bath, or any

pleasant simple remedy; which, when a disorder is more than half imaginary and almost entirely nervous, may answer,—but not to one who feels—I care not to own it—his days are numbered! Therefore, my dear Arthur, if you would meet me again ere I go hence and am no more seen, hasten your journey hither.

"Our acquaintance is of late date; our ages are different, and care, more than time, has withered my manners, if not my ideas. You can have little conception, judging from my cold exterior, of the regard I have felt for you from the first moment of our acquaintance: for the heart will become, though not frozen itself, yet incased in ice, when, in the course of a long life, it finds its best feelings returned back upon itself; or when, as I have constantly observed, the cordiality that my name and manners have brought forth, has been exchanged to frowns upon my extreme poverty being made known! For, thanks to a harsh father and my own extravagance, I have experienced the happiness of dreading the expense of coach-hire in a raging storm, and in a raging fever have dared not encounter the bill of a medical attendant, even for one draught of cooling me-

dicine. My penury was no more a secret than my extravagance; and my father, on my return from India, gave that as a reason for not receiving me into his house, as the style of life his station obliged him to keep might lead me into expense. I therefore had a lodging up two pair of stairs in a house belonging to my father's butler, which he had purchased out of his savings, and for which, out of mine, he in great part repaid himself. I lived anywhere and anyhow, always trying to get out of difficulties—always plunging the deeper into debt.

"But why dwell upon those hateful times? would that I could obliterate them altogether! but they haunt me: I left England to forget them—yet they are ever in my mind—and now are at my pen's point, to worry my fainting spirit, and weary your youthful one. Never may you know the anguish I experienced when, first as a baronet of fortune, I thought it my duty to attend the so once beloved hunting field! How my heart sickened at the sight of my thorough-bred hunter, second horse, well-mounted groom, as if in mockery at that very covert side where, when full of health, spirits, and passion for the chase, I had so often come to mount some foundered hunter or broken-winded hack, and try to

vie with elder sons, possessors of estates, or even farmers, in their amusement!—an attempt which, of course, was only productive of disappointment almost amounting to disgrace; and which amusement now, when health, spirits, and taste for the pleasure were gone, I had by Fortune's favours at length the power to enjoy—most truly with what appetite I might!

"The retrospect of wealth in poverty, I suspect, is not more painful than that of adversity in prosperity. When in the sear and yellow leaf, you have every means of enjoyment but the power: when Fortune's tardy smiles shine upon a withered heart, soured mind, and shattered constitution, they are deprived of all their value, and only add more poignancy to the bitter recollections of former times,—when, the capacity of enjoyment at its highest, and only equalled by the desire, the means were as far removed as heaven from earth; when each day was one of privation and self-denial, on which no ray, no shadow of the fickle goddess ever fell,—and at that period of youth too, when, as Madame de Staël observes, 'on s'attend au bonheur—l'on croit en avoir le droit, et l'on se révolte à l'idée de ne pas l'obtenir!'—Adieu, &c. C. M."

The day following that on which he had received Sir Charles's letter, St. Clair was on his way to Rome; and the first person whom he sought upon his arrival was his friend, in whose altered appearance he read the sad confirmation of the fears his letter had created. On consulting the physician who attended him, it appeared that his disorder was incurable, though it might be lingering.

To soothe therefore the sick man became Arthur's object, and for that purpose he established himself beneath the same roof; he read to him, talked with him, and, accompanying him in his drives, was ever an unwearied and attentive listener to his plaints, whether of his health or his early misfortunes. The winter, however, passed away without any great change for the worse; and there were even moments when Arthur imagined that he was improving. Such hopes were, however, decidedly set at rest when, early in March, the disorder seemed rapidly to increase, and the physicians pronounced that in a very few weeks all must be over.

To dwell on the awful subject of death belongs to the preacher, and not to the novelist.

If the former so often fail in awakening attention; if the passing bell—the hearse—the churchyard cannot arouse feelings of mortality, and for a moment stop the smile of levity through the voice of truth, how can fiction prevail? No inspiration is required to teach us that flesh is grass; that, "if we had eyes keen enough, we should see the arrows of death flying in all directions;" and that "life, the further it goeth, the nearer it draweth unto death." The commonest understanding can comprehend such things without preacher or books; and if the still small voice be not heard, "neither will that of the charmer, charm he never so wisely."

Early in the month of April, the remains of Sir Charles Maxwell were consigned to the earth, in the Protestant burial-ground at Rome. Who is there amongst the living, that, standing between the tomb of Caius Sestus and his of yesterday, could view the fate of man and empires, as there displayed around him, without an awful thought of life's nothingness!—and, could its last earthly abode be of moment to the senseless clay, who would not but choose that spot as their resting-place!

Though little blessed in the morning of life by friendship, Sir Charles Maxwell was not deserted in the evening of his existence; and two most sincere friends cheered his last hours, and sorrowed over his grave. Most gratefully did he ever express himself for their kindness; and towards Arthur St. Clair his gratitude manifested itself in a manner for which he was totally unprepared.

Sir Charles Maxwell's fortune was large, and, Lord Monckton had imagined, according to his high Tory principles, strictly entailed on the male heir. Thinking thus, he never introduced the subject of wills to his dying friend. As to Arthur St. Clair, he considered it as an affair in which he could have no possible interest or business; and if he ever did give the matter a passing thought, it was only to reflect that the heir-at-law was probably as good a man to inherit as any other, and that, by letting matters take their course, Sir Charles would be saved some trouble to do right, and the lawyers some temptation to do wrong.

Sir Charles thought differently. A very properly drawn up will was found, by which it appeared that half the property was to go with the title; the other half was divided between the orphan chil-

dren of a man who had been his earliest friend, and Arthur St. Clair; the preamble showing that the said Arthur St. Clair, for his share, would become possessed of an estate called Melcombe, in Somersetshire, the annual income from which might be considered between four and five thousand a year.

The splendid prospects which Sir Charles Maxwell's death opened to Arthur St. Clair caused no diminution in his regrets, and perhaps increased them: for so convincing a proof of how one human being had valued him, added only poignancy to the sorrow he felt that they should meet no more; that his kindly voice, and partial judgment, in no one else probably ever to be revived, was eternally silenced in the tomb.

The greatest satisfaction he derived from his increase of fortune was the power of assisting his brother Edward. To him Arthur instantly sent a large remittance in money, and the offer of his house in Somersetshire as a residence.

To General Fitz-Norman, Arthur St. Clair's regret at Sir Charles's loss, and apparent indifference to his consequently increased wealth, was perfectly unaccountable. This son of Mars was

not deeply read in the secrets of the human heart, and perhaps he was ignorant that such a part of the human frame existed: he was perfectly unaware that friendship can be founded upon esteem, totally independent of all worldly advantages; and St. Clair's dejection he could only imagine to arise from bad health, or disappointment at not inheriting more of Sir Charles Maxwell's property. Before, therefore, the wary general began to make the *amende honorable* for former negligence, and for "the good of his family" to cultivate St. Clair, he made secret inquiries as to the real value of his property, how left, and whether improvable or perishable.

The investigation proved satisfactory as to Arthur St. Clair's stability, and an invitation was forthwith despatched to beg the pleasure of his company to Tivoli, as a change of scene might prove beneficial to his spirits. The invitation was declined by Mr. St. Clair, as he was engaged to join Lord Monckton when he went. This information brought about a counter movement on the part of the general; he halted his party in order to join, *bon gré*, *mal gré*, the forces of Lord Monckton, determined to watch how St.

Clair and Blanche Fitz-Norman were together, and likewise resolved to circumvent any project that Arthur's increased importance might give rise to in his cousin.

The party took place, and the general was on the watch; but he could not discover any increased attention on the part of either Lord Monckton or his daughter towards Arthur, who, more taciturn than ever, was not particularly assiduous in his devoirs to any of the ladies. This could not be said of the general's manner towards Arthur himself: he rarely abandoned him for a moment, and was painfully harassing in his attentions; interrupting his moral or classical reveries amongst the ruins of Adrian's villa; obtruding his discordant voice in *fade* observations on the falls, when the falls alone were quite sufficient for one mind to attend to; and in the ride to view the Cascatelli, contriving to be always at his side, inquiring as to his property in England,—his intentions of returning—of leaving the army — of coming into parliament — marrying — and, in fact, putting every question to him that a vulgar mind dared either to imagine or utter.

The Tivoli party, however, concluded General

Fitz-Norman's opportunities of wearying his intended victim, who, totally unconscious of the gracious prospects designed for him, after taking an affectionate leave of Lord Monckton and his daughter, sprang into his travelling carriage, and in one month from that period was established in the capital of France. There we will leave him for the present, and turn to one of whom Arthur St. Clair often, and perhaps always thought, and who has not entirely vanished from the scene, any more than, I trust, from the reader's memory,— Clara Danvers, now Lady Fontenoy.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lord Fontenoy had an only sister, who was several years older than himself, and though sufficiently ready to dance, sing, flirt, and, in fact, act the girl, yet, if the truth must be told, it was a part she had been performing for far too many years. As, however, the secret of her age no living witness could betray, and the world at large, either from good nature or indifference, were as silent as herself on the subject, she nourished the belief that her appearance did not denote it, and, with her gauze dress looped up with roses *à la Flore*, and her head-dress *en suite*, she would make bold at Almack's to act *vis-à-vis* in a quadrille to some lovely girl all freshness, bloom, and *naïveté*, her cheeks covered with alternate blushes—now at the compliment her partner whispered in her ear, now at the alarm of dancing for the first time in public.

Lady Almeria had little fortune, and since her father's death she had resided with an aunt. Her brother's marriage, however, opened new prospects, and, at her lord's desire, Lady Fontenoy proposed to Lady Almeria Delaval the taking up her abode with them.

The proposal was readily acceded to; and Lady Almeria, with her maid, lap-dog, band-boxes, and packages, arrived at Clinton Court, Lady Fontenoy's seat, almost as soon as the newly-married pair took possession of it themselves.

Lady Fontenoy's natural disposition was kind, and she partook not in the least of that too common, and, we fear, national selfishness, which makes many otherwise amiable people shrink from the possibility of *their* home being the home of any other human being, however close the tie either by love or friendship. Exclusiveness is, perhaps, characteristic of the English in more particulars than society: they cannot bear their walks and walls to be viewed with an equally familiar eye as their own, or that another should be in any way considered as forming a permanent part of their establishment.

Not such was Lady Fontenoy: her tastes were formed in a foreign school, where far more respect is paid to the bonds of family union; and that the needy Lady Almeria should reside with her wealthy brother, seemed almost a matter of course to her sister-in-law. Lord Fontenoy had spoken of his sister with affection; no other passport was required to Lady Fontenoy's heart, and the day of Lady Almeria's arrival was a positive *jour de fête* in her estimation, as introducing her to one whom she resolved to win to herself in one moment by kindness of reception, and thus secure as firm a friend in the sister, as she imagined she had a lover in the brother.

There was nothing in Lady Almeria's appearance to prejudice any one very much in her favour. In early youth she had been tolerably handsome, and rather admired; but whether it was her poverty, or her manners, or her disposition, which was prejudicial, on nearer acquaintance, to her advancement, is not known,—one by one her admirers vanished, others succeeded again to retreat in their turn, till Lady Almeria found herself verging upon, if not actually, an old maid, without a shadow of a lover—her figure a gaunt

skeleton, her complexion faded, her mind soured ! She was a person whom circumstances — no very remarkable case — had rendered what she was. Had she married early in life, become the mother of children, with duties to perform, a place in society to fill, and objects to bestow her tenderness upon, receiving it in return from them, she might have been a different character. As it was, the death of a harsh father, at fifteen, threw her upon the protection of a widowed aunt, of weak health, weak intellect, and small fortune : thence ensued privation, neglect, and disappointment, till her never very tender heart became completely cauterised ; and not even momentary pleasure, or common-place thankfulness, was excited at the kindness of her reception at Clinton Court, in the withered being to whose sallow cheeks, with sisterly affection, Lady Fontenoy pressed her rosy lips.

Lady Almeria was no hypocrite, to do her justice, and Clara not deficient in penetration ; the actual state of things was in one moment clearly unveiled to view, and as withdrawing herself from her embrace she had time to regard the countenance of her future associate, she read in the deep lines that countenance pourtrayed, prejudice,

selfishness, ill-nature, and envy! Lady Fontenoy shuddered.

The day of Lady Almeria's arrival a large party were assembled at Clinton. When Lady Fontenoy descended to dinner, her natural loveliness was, if possible, increased by the loveliness of her dress. As a bride, a beauty, and a fortune, independently of her position as mistress of the mansion, every eye was turned upon her with looks of unfeigned admiration and interest—all eyes but those of Lady Almeria, in whom curiosity could not so far conquer envy as to induce her to bestow a slight regard on one, whom, by the previous discourse, she knew everybody present was on the tiptoe of expectation to see; and, by the murmur of satisfaction on her appearance, she also knew that all expectations were most fully gratified. With a resolution worthy of a better cause, (for in her heart she was dying to see how the paragon was attired,) she fixed her stern glance on a portrait over the chimney, as if fascinated by the red velvet coat and bag-wig of the old gentleman there portrayed.

Lady Fontenoy approached, and addressed her sister in a few words of polite civility, to which Lady

Almeria replied somewhat shortly, and continued still to regard the portrait with fixed attention.

"I am glad my ancestor is so attractive," observed Lady Fontenoy: "it is considered a well-painted picture."

"It may be so," answered Lady Almeria, quickly withdrawing her eyes when thus reminded as to whose relation she gazed at.

"But, good heavens! Lady Fontenoy, is such splendid attire the fashion of your house? I ought to demand pardon for the simplicity of mine—but *I* had imagined a *grande toilette* to be extremely *mauvais ton* in the country:—I see that I am to stand corrected," glancing a malignant sneer around her; "all here follow the fashion of the house more than that of the day."

"Oh, we are too happy to have any hints upon the last point," exclaimed Lady Fontenoy, "and we natives shall be enchanted if you can set us right. Pray, is your dress the last Parisian mode?"

Lady Almeria coloured deeply, as all eyes were turned upon her dingy white gros de Naples, ill-made and old-fashioned.

"I do not dress according to the Paris fashions —my gown was made after one that the Duchess

of F—— or the Duchess of H——, I forget which, lent me the pattern of."

This astonishing piece of intelligence was meant to annihilate the natives; but it had a very different effect; smiles were renewed, and glances interchanged, till the announcement of dinner gave something more important to think of.

Lady Fontenoy, at the head of her dining-table, desirous to please those who were equally anxious to be pleased, looking lovely, talking gaily, and with her handsome lord opposite to her, soon forgot that such a person as Lady Almeria existed. Fortunate would it have been, had the forgetfulness been mutual, and if that odious passion envy had not kept alive every faculty of attention in Lady Almeria as to her sister-in-law's words, actions, and appearance. If ever her ladyship's countenance relaxed into anything like complacency, it was towards her brother; if affection had any place in her heart, he it was who inspired it; and, in the warmth of her sisterly love, she actually worked herself up into the belief that he was thrown away by marrying the rich, beautiful, clever, and amiable Lady Clara Danvers!

Whatever might be Lady Almeria's feelings

and opinions, they were entirely thrown back upon herself to brood over. She was too disagreeable or too poor to command the attention of even such a being as Mrs. Willis's Miss Croak, out of the house; and of course in it, if she had had the courage to speak, she never could have found any one who had the courage to listen to the slightest imputation against the slightest of Lady Fontenoy's actions, or against the most inconsiderable of the manifold beauties which rendered her person loveliness itself.

Had Lady Almeria been vulgar, foolish, ignorant, or merely bad-tempered, some hopes of improvement might have existed; but she had rather the manners of good society, with some acuteness; and though she aspired to more general knowledge than she possessed, both as regarded men and books, yet she was not deficient as to the last. A great deal of leisure had obliged her to cultivate her mind by way of occupation, and by fits and starts she had accumulated sufficient abstruse knowledge to puzzle the ignorant, and excite contempt in the learned. Her information on more general points was less superficial; and hardly a day passed without her ladyship think-

ing it incumbent upon herself to set right some luckless wight, or still more luckless child, on a point of biography, geography, or simple arithmetic. The sarcastic arrogance with which such faults were detected, exposed, and rectified, made Lady Almeria positively detestable and detested.

Numerous as were the disappointments she had endured, and neglected as she now was, yet Lady Almeria still had the vanity to presume that a brilliant marriage awaited her—and in both her waking and sleeping dreams did she see herself in robes of ermine, her brow encircled by a peeress's coronet, possibly taking precedence of the Countess of Fontenoy, and certainly laying down laws to the world, and revenging every slight she had received in her more humble days.

Time familiarised Lady Fontenoy to her sister's mood, and time rendered her insensible to such taunts as were evidently levelled at her, in the form of maxims which, in her own opinion, Lady Almeria deemed to be incontrovertible. "It is low-minded people who care for dress"—"A foreign education is sure to do harm"—"Heiresses are always weak in their intellects"—"Short people can never command respect."

The cause of the aversion was far too evident to Lady Fontenoy's quick understanding to be very wounding to her self-love, though it was sufficiently painful as regarded human nature in general. Still she most devoutly hoped that such a specimen of the dark side of our species was but of rare occurrence, and, though obliged to receive her beneath her roof, that so near a semblance to the scorpion tribe might never cross her path again. It was of her Clara wrote as follows to an intimate friend and relation :—

"If I were to become suddenly old, poor, friendless and untitled, I think it not impossible that Lady Almeria's rancour might cease ; for my youth, wealth, and station are certainly the barbed arrows which rankle in her heart. I had really no idea of the extent of my perfections till I made Lady Almeria's acquaintance. I have seen a becoming gown deprive her of her appetite for dinner, and a compliment produce nearly a fit of the jaundice. She essays every possible means to divert the subject of discourse from riding, as it is sure ground to bring my ladyship's powers forward with encomiums,—encomiums which nearly make her ladyship faint, more particularly if

Fontenoy should be the culprit. Happily for her peace, his lordship is not much addicted to the laudatory style; so she may eat her dinner in peace nineteen days out of twenty, for any praise bestowed by him on, my dear love, your affectionate CLARA FONTENOY."

Cautious as Lady Fontenoy was with her tongue, her eyes were invariably treacherous; and polite—nay, assiduous as were her manners, yet still Lady Almeria saw she was disliked: but as her ladyship possessed a most noble stock of a commodity called vanity, she drew upon that for her consolation, and actually imagined, in the workings of her self-love, that envy was the cause of her sister-in-law's antipathy. To such an extent, indeed, did she carry her audacity, that one day, when rather reproached by an old friend of the family for not accommodating herself more to her sister's taste, she answered that her sister-in-law might be more properly accused for differing from her. They were certainly very much unlike, but

> Prova è non dubbia
> D' alta innocenza, esser di morte afflitto
> Dove Creonte è il re.

Unhappily the person addressed was not ignorant of the Italian tongue; he heard and understood both quotation and application, and hardly ever addressed himself to Lady Almeria afterwards—a loss which Lady Almeria severely felt, though she liked not to confess the cause; for Mr. Poole was one on whom she had fixed to honour with her virgin hand whenever she wished to *settle*, and no coronet actually at her feet, awaiting her commands in breathless anxiety. To this source of sorrow she soon added another: Lady Fontenoy might envy her, but she was constrained to acknowledge that, upon closer examination, her countenance betrayed more pity or indifference than any other feeling! Then her manners were so well-bred, that they constrained her to adopt the same; which, added to the lesson Mr. Poole had taught her, forced Lady Almeria into the appearance of satisfaction—a semblance very unlike the reality: it acted, however, as a restraint upon the licence of her tongue, if not of her countenance, and she received her fair sister's attentions with sufficient politeness to deceive common observers, and, indeed, when in very high good humour, she would constrain herself to echo

faintly Lady Fontenoy's praises. To be sure, at such times, which were rather rare in their occurrence, her lips were pallid with the agitation the words passing between them produced; but still they did pass—some six times in the course of a twelvemonth!

It was very fortunate for Lady Almeria that a woman, in marrying, resigns all her goods and chattels to her husband. She was therefore within the letter of the law when she spoke of everything around as her brother's. It was invariably "Lord Fontenoy's carriage, — his garden, his fruit, — his horses, park, pictures, plate;" — so that, to the few who were uninformed upon the subject, no suspicion ever entered their mind, from Lady Almeria's discourse, that Clinton Court had not descended from a long line of Fontenoys to its present possessor, or that a certain very noble family of Danvers had any claim therein.

Whether it was from want of delicacy or want of observation, he was silent who ought to have restrained such flippancy of tongue in his sister. Some people imagined that Lord Fontenoy was nowise displeased at the appropriation given to all around; but it was to be hoped they were

mistaken. Certain it was, that the arrogant superciliousness of manner which Lady Almeria had imported from the house of her aunt, where she was of some consequence, into that of her sister-in-law, where she was of none, instead of decreasing, seemed rather to gather strength; and it could therefore only be the earl's negative support which sustained her. Such at least was the opinion of the world—and they do sometimes by accident stumble upon the truth.

Lady Fontenoy becoming habituated to Lady Almeria, ceased to think about her. "No man," Johnson observes, "thinks much of what he despises;" and as the faults of those nearer and dearer, particularly in one instance, grew more evident, those of Lady Almeria were, if not absolutely concealed, much overshadowed.

Lady Fontenoy, attracted by beauty, fell in love and married—not an uncommon case or error. Time passed on: Lord Fontenoy was as beautiful as ever,—as graceful, as polite in his manners; but still Clara thought he was altered. Angry with herself for entertaining such a notion, she determined to analyse the source from whence so strange an idea could arise. The at-

tempt was rash, and the result unsatisfactory. She found she loved, but was not in love, if such a distinction be admissible,—and that the light veil which deludes so many to their misery was removed by the hand of time; and, as though awakened from a dream, she beheld Lord Fontenoy such as he really was, and not such as her fancy had painted him. He was not altered, but her vision was improved!

There are many wives who, on arriving at the critical period of married life which Lady Fontenoy had reached, open their eyes, and, upon seeing the truth, close them again with the utmost precipitation, and comfortably resign themselves to their former dreams. Not so Lady Fontenoy: the spirit of inquiry was aroused, and anxious though curious, trembling yet hoping, she bent her whole soul to read and understand her husband. When free from the thraldom of a first and vehement passion, the task was not one of difficulty to such a mind as hers; but the result was painful to agony. It may be as well to describe Lord Fontenoy such as he really was; and yet, with no prominent features to be one's guide, his character would be best described by negatives; and in

saying what he was not, some idea may be formed of what he was.

We have often heard of the line between virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood; and that this line is the favourite path of many poor wavering mortals, who, perched thereon, are by turns inclined one way and anon another, — sometimes quite losing their balance, but more often, though bent by every blast, still keeping foot in the neutral ground described. Few, however, are so completely satisfied with that position, or strong in it, as to stand perfectly unmoved by the tempests or temptations around them; but of those few cold, steady, unbending persons Lord Fontenoy was one. He was not wise or foolish, sensible or insensible, good or bad, ill-natured or the reverse, affectionate, nor yet entirely selfish;—in short, to find any one point by which to describe him was impossible. Even his constant pursuit of field-sports was carried on in a cold, calculating manner, as if Nature, having bestowed upon him a good eye in shooting at a mark, a good hand and seat on horseback, with a strong constitution and well-strung nerves, he was necessitated to be a sportsman, which he pur-

sued in a dull, matter-of-fact, business-like manner, as though impelled by obligation and not by pleasure; which pleasure, however unenthusiastically pursued, was almost his only one; for he cared not for books, music, politics, society, conversation, display, hospitality, or even domestic bliss. To do him justice, however, in one respect some character he had shown—prudence! Before his marriage, this quality, as regarded expense, had made him highly respected and respectable, as rendering him independent; but with the rise in his fortunes this same prudence became—meanness!

Not that Lord Fontenoy was a miser, but it was not by him (and, truth to tell, rather against his wish) that around Clinton Court schools arose,—that cottage gardens bloomed, and their inhabitants looked healthful and happy;—it was not he who subscribed to charities, and had ever his purse open to the sick and needy, of whatever age, country, or sect. A far more exalted being was the good angel who spread such happiness around;—the author of such benevolence, often veiled beneath her husband's name, was his wife! No; Lord Fontenoy's activity was principally

visible in the prosecution of poachers, and his benevolence by getting their punishment mitigated when convicted. He was not troubled with any particular delicacy in winning a few shillings of the poor curate at whist—a game of which the poor man knew nothing: though this he knew, —that the wear and tear of his horse and best clothes, the loss of his time and pence, were poorly compensated by being allowed to drink an ocean of claret, champagne, and burgundy, if he liked, and to eat of a variety of dishes the very names as well as natures of which he was ignorant.

Lord Fontenoy also had no scruples in the indulgence of sufficient knowledge of horse-dealing to put the wary on their guard, the unwary into his power; nor was he very particular in remembering, in his now more prosperous days, those from whom in former times he had most thankfully received repeated favours, in the shape of dinners, loans of horses, carriages, or even, when his purse was very low indeed, coach-hire! But why continue?—do we not all know such a character?—alas! it is not an uncommon one. Lord Fontenoy was the product of that hot-bed — a public school; — that nursery or forcing-house which

produces the fairest flowers and the coarsest weeds,—where so many are in a more or less degree infected by that selfish worldly-mindedness, which, according to disposition, drives a man to the utmost extent of boundless extravagance in personal gratification, or, for the self-same object, is the occasion of prudent cunning, carried, as in Lord Fontenoy's case, to the very verge of dishonesty.

Such was Lord Fontenoy's character. Clara shuddered as it unfolded itself; she trembled, hoped, feared, and was convinced. That her disappointment was acute need not be told; it produced a constant heaviness at heart, which, whether cheerful or sad, never abandoned her. The pangs of conscience could hardly be more severe than the pangs of a wounded spirit as felt by Lady Fontenoy. The natural consequence ensued,—the mind acted upon the body; Lady Fontenoy became ill, and, after some faint struggles to shake off what was termed a nervous fever, was at length obliged to resign herself to her physician, her room, and her couch.

Six weeks passed away; Clara was at length restored to health; her sick room had taught her one lesson—resignation! But submission is not oblivion, blindness, or happiness: she thought, however, it was concealment,—but she was mistaken. Lady Almeria Delaval had not only penetrated, but anticipated her sister's disappointment. She knew the character of her brother, and she knew enough of his wife's to be well aware that her affection for him, being founded only on his personal attractions, would speedily die away, and that he possessed not one other qualification to secure the love of such a woman as Lady Fontenoy: yet with such knowledge, strange to say, Lady Almeria loved her brother and hated Clara; for *hatred* is not too strong a word, although perhaps *strange* might have been spared: there was nothing singular in a woman who detested superiority in mind or person, who ever preferred inferiority, and whose only feeling was family affection, loving such as Lord Fontenoy, and disliking his wife; the singularity would have been, had it been otherwise.

Lady Fontenoy recovered, and once more appeared at the head of her table ; her countenance not sad, but serious ; her manners more matronly, more dignified, and her whole air as that of one in whom years, not weeks, had elapsed since last she assumed the hostess's part. The malignant spirit of Lady Almeria bounded with joy as she viewed the change, and for once a smile played round her thin colourless lips, as her imagination pictured that the company assembled were all secretly acknowledging the same feelings as herself, and in their hearts thought Lady Fontenoy's day over, now the roses no longer bloomed in her cheeks, nor the flowers of girlish wit in her speech.

" Her sun is set," thought Lady Almeria with delight, as if her own consequently was to arise ; and presuming on the supposition, she actually took Lady Fontenoy's discarded part of vivacity into her own hands, and, to the utter surprise of the society, sprang a mine upon them of wit and wisdom, which if any one dreamed of her possessing, they never deemed it possible she would display.

Her jokes however fell unheeded, and her quick eyes soon discovered the character was a failure :

pity, which usually sat on the countenances of her brother's guests at his sister's melancholy air and soured countenance, now gave place to disgust at her misplaced liveliness, at the very moment when the common noise of servants attending upon a large dinner-party seemed more than the languid state of Lady Fontenoy could well bear, and every one else, with very different feelings from those of Lady Almeria, was anxious to be as tranquil as possible.

Lady Almeria's neighbour, however, unwittingly brought her to order by remarking that he thought Lady Fontenoy was more beautiful than ever in her invalid state.

"You think so?" answered Lady Almeria sharply. "I never thought her handsome; and now, under the influence of low spirits, bad health, or ill humour, I find her absolutely plain."

"Plain! your ladyship must be raving. Lady Fontenoy plain!"

"Yes, I repeat my words—plain; and I think poor Fontenoy very much to be pitied in having married so evanescent a creature. He could have little expected, in the course of one twelvemonth, to have witnessed the decay of her bloom."

"Poor Fontenoy indeed! he is sadly to be pitied! I am not surprised at your ladyship's sympathy for so ill-used a mortal. Poor gentleman! he seems to have quite lost his appetite." (Lord Fontenoy had been toiling for ten minutes in the amputation of the leg of a turkey, and having accomplished his object, was beginning to discuss it.) "He is grown very thin—I hope he will have courage to bear his misfortunes like a hero, and in a manner worthy of his noble name. With such a sympathising sister as Lady Almeria, a being like Lady Fontenoy may perhaps be endured as a wife."

The broad grin with which this speech concluded, from a man of more penetration than delicacy, frightened Lady Almeria, not from, but into propriety. She dared not retort for fear of a rejoinder, and resuming her accustomed sulky taciturnity, fell back into her usual insignificance.

Lady Fontenoy read in her sister-in-law's countenance that her disappointed feelings were betrayed; it rendered her more cautious as to others, which, as her health improved, was not difficult of accomplishment. There was no particular necessity for concealment as regarded Lord Fon-

tenoy; he was very inferior to his sister in penetration or observation, and really discovered no change in his wife. To do Lord Fontenoy justice, he admired Clara as much as he was capable of admiring anything: he thought her the handsomest woman he ever beheld, and that so lovely a being, with so lovely a fortune, should have fallen to his lot, was a piece of good luck which, handsome as he was himself, he had the modesty to think—when by accident he did accomplish such an effort as to reflect, even in the most modified form—was almost beyond his deserts, and certainly beyond his expectations; for though, as has been already shown, he had a very pretty talent of forgetfulness, his lordship could not quite drive from his mind certain reminiscences connected with a certain wealthy dowager, some thirty years his senior, at the period he had attained his one-and-twentieth year, and whom, at that romantic time of life, he was sufficiently heroical, philosophical, unsentimental, and prudential, to select as the fair object for his hopes and fears. Lady Almeria was his confidant and adviser. The dowager was as much the woman after her heart in all respects, for she was old,

ugly, dull, and rich, as she was acceptable for the last-named quality in the eyes of her brother. Dull, however, as was the dowager, she was not a perfect fool; she had penetration to discover and wisdom to discourage the young man's pursuit, and his sister's more energetic importunities and flatteries; and when at length the latter actually brought the affair to an issue by proposing for her brother, the dowager declined the favour, and with so few expressions as to the honour designed her, that it was in vain for Lady Almeria to flatter herself that age and stupidity were blinded as to the sordidness of the proposition. Lord Fontenoy bore his disappointment manfully, and the world with its customary justice gave him the credit of rejection, the poor dowager being the rejected: a report which Lady Almeria most studiously encouraged, her brother did not contradict, and the ill-used dowager, through her upraised coach-glasses, mob cap, and velvet capote, to say nothing of defective ears, never heard.

How often, in after days, did Lady Almeria sigh over the dowager's obduracy! more particularly when, shortly subsequent to her brother's

marriage, she died, bequeathing a fortune equal to that of Clara's to various hospitals. To do Lord Fontenoy justice, he did not share his sister's regrets; and if ever a blush crossed his cheek, it was at any allusion being made to wealthy widows: but whether the blush arose from the consciousness of the meanness he had betrayed with regard to one of the tribe, or that he felt ashamed to have so little understood his own value, it is difficult to say.

But enough of Lord Fontenoy; it is time to return to the St. Clairs. We left Ellen lamenting her father's economical tour, and imparting to her husband, over their solitary dish of mutton-broth, her alarms that Lord St. Clair might not be able to exist in any comfort, deprived of M. Aubert's varied talents as displayed every day at his table. Her mind, however, was happily set at rest when in the course of time his lordship again appeared in England,—his finances so restored as to make him take repossession of his house in town, and reinstate John More in his leathern chair, and his valuable constitution apparently none the worse for such chance-medley *cuisines* as his travels had made him acquainted with.

We question whether the baron himself, or even John More, was more rejoiced than the gentle Ellen, who, her fears appeased on her father's account, had now no scruples in giving way to the most unfeigned delight at the pleasing prospects which Arthur St. Clair's accession of fortune gave rise to ; a circumstance, the intelligence of which reached England about the same time as Lord and Lady St. Clair and suite.

CHAPTER XV.

Without a shadow of a hope, that with the subject which inspired the author of "Emma," the writer of these pages can find similar inspiration, yet "the country wins me still!" and painful as is the necessity, that hazardous territory where Miss Austen singly triumphed must be encroached upon, and with every prospect of disgrace and obloquy; the country and country society are to be portrayed, such as Edward and Ellen St. Clair found themselves involved in, when, profiting by their brother's offer, they took possession early in September of Melcombe in Somersetshire, the bountiful bequest of Sir Charles Maxwell.

Before leaving London, the Earl of G——, whose vast estates spread far and wide in the West, and the Countess of B——, who owns a relation in every quarter of that region, both

positively declared to the St. Clairs, they knew Melcombe well; it was the most retired spot under the sun; had no neighbour within ten miles, nor, but for the little town of Maltby, a house deserving the name. Far from disagreeable was such intelligence to those addressed, who, panting for fresh air, tranquillity, verdure and cleanliness, and surfeited by society—which a long residence in London had of course never for a moment rendered them independent of,—hailed with delight the peaceful prospect held out. As the gates of the entrance from the public road closed upon them, Ellen was in positive despair how to divide properly her attention between the beautiful green of a grass field, where the sheep were feeding on one side of the carriage, and a very pretty shrubbery which extended itself on the other; in which her imagination pictured some delicious rustic seat where, with her child at her feet, and a favourite author in her hand, many a soft hour would pass away, till Edward's return home from the long-forgone pleasures of shooting and riding.

Of society beyond him, she thought not, unless it was the parish priest on a Sunday after church,

or the village-school dame, with the report of the pupils' progress, — for, of course, a school was to be immediately established under her auspices, such as in former days, on a more limited scale than her present projects embraced, she had been allowed to create at St. Clair Abbey. With these thoughts did Ellen sink to rest, little dreaming that their arrival had caused matter of discourse to half a dozen tea-tables, in as many cottages; the smoke of whose chimneys, if not of whose tea-urns, might be seen rising close to that very gate, by which a few hours before they had entered the premises.

Some thirty years before the period alluded to, a speculator purchased a piece of ground, called Chartley Common, adjacent to Melcombe, in which he built various small tenements, above the rank of cottages, though so called, and beneath that of villas. In due time the said tenements were all disposed of, and the speculator departed with his profits, leaving to their fate both cottages and purchasers. These Chartley cottages, for so were they designated, were neither unsightly, uncomfortable, nor despicable; they had each its pretensions to verandahs, green-houses, summer-

houses, and gardens; but they had the misfortune of being utterly insignificant in the eyes of the more exalted lords of the soil, and probably utterly unknown to them. Indeed, had it not been for the fortunate circumstance that the mansions of one or two squires of tolerable descent, and of no very great means, did arise within the precincts of their walks, and that from vacuity of mind, good-nature, love of gossip, or want of other society, such squires, their ladies or children, were so good as to patronise the settlers of Chartley Common, the said inhabitants might have lived and died in utter ignorance of the reforms of the day, either as regarded politics or dress —still offering prayers against "that arch apostate Boney," though he had long sunk into obscurity, if not into the grave; and unacquainted with the grand transitions which had taken place in fashion,—that the reign of scanty habiliments was past — that of large sleeves, large caps, and large petticoats begun. From the last-mentioned dire disgrace, Mrs. Musgrove of the Park, and Lady Long Acre of Longacre House, rescued in some measure the widow and six Miss Wilsons, Mr. and Mrs. Watson, Captain Town and his son,

and four maiden ladies who found it agreeable or convenient to establish themselves together, and with the above-named individuals occupied the principal residences on Chartley Common.

Miss Parsons, one of the maiden ladies, had been a beauty in her youth, and presuming upon the strength of her charms, had at that period refused a baronet. No other offer had ever presented itself, and after various years spent as governess and humble companion, — for which avocations she had every requisite but education,— she established herself among the sisterhood on Chartley Common, with her savings and the *éclat* of her cruelty twenty-five years back.

The remainder of that sisterhood consisted of a poor clergyman's daughter, who for more than twenty years of her life had nourished the delusive hope of being honoured by the proposals of a neighbouring curate, and two sisters named Smith, in whose pallid faces some traces of beauty still remained, and whose manners spoke of better fortunes. Of their history little was known, excepting that the prying eyes of Miss Parsons had detected the portrait of an officer in the bedchamber of the elder one ; and had the officer himself

been there discovered, greater surprise could not have been occasioned. But who the original of that portrait might be, not one of the Chartley gossips could discover, though Miss Parsons came boldly to the point with the younger sister, and inquired who Miss Smith's sweetheart might have been. No information was, however, gained beyond a sigh, so profound that, like Lord Burleigh's shake of the head, imagination could hardly picture meaning sufficient for its importance; and the terrified and mystified inhabitants of Chartley cottages were led to suppose any catastrophe connected with unfortunate love — nothing, in fact, short of jealousy, and death by suicide, treachery, or the hand of the law!

Four days after the arrival of the St. Clairs at Melcombe, Mrs. and the six Miss Wilsons set forth on their evening walk. The column moved with noiseless tread and silent tongues, till they encountered Admiral and Mrs. Musgrove, also using a little wholesome exercise after dinner. The parties joined, and the admiral and his lady were so condescending as to accompany Mrs. Wilson home to tea, where they were shortly joined by Captain Town and his son, and the

party was further augmented by the arrival of the decayed spinster of baronet-cruelty notoriety! and who, it was supposed "on the Common," would have been very glad to redeem her character by receiving the hand of Captain Town, had it been tendered to her acceptance. The expressive glance which the whole family of Wilson exchanged at the appearance of Miss Parsons's yellow and lilac plume at the window, accompanied by "Well, good folks, are you at home?" showed the sense they entertained of the honour of her visit, and for whom they imagined it intended.

The cups arranged, the tea made by the fair hands of Miss Wilson senior, and the customary polite interrogatories somewhat abated, of—"Do you *take* sugar! Do you *take* cream? milk? butter? cake?" &c., the following conversation ensued.

"Well, Mrs. Wilson," observed Mrs. Musgrove, "I have seen the new arrivals. I have got the start of you and made my visit at Melcombe."

"It was not my place, ma'am," answered Mrs. Wilson meekly, "to take precedence of you, Mrs. Musgrove. For the sake of the children, how-

ever, I shall now venture to follow — they, poor little things," (the youngest owned to twenty-nine,) " should not be prevented in forming any new, agreeable acquaintance. How did you find Mrs. St. Clair?"

" Why, I cannot say much for my visit. These *fine* folks, as we were told they were, inhabit not one quarter of the house—just the study and parlour adjoining."

" So Mrs. Macaroon told me," observed Miss Parsons.

" They have no servants," continued Mrs. Musgrove.

" Just as Mrs. Macaroon said," again repeated Miss Parsons. — (Mrs. Macaroon was the housekeeper at Melcombe, who had lived in Sir Charles Maxwell's family, was continued by Arthur St. Clair, and as secretly a great ally of Miss Parsons.)

" They keep no carriage-horses," said Mrs. Musgrove. " Mrs. St. Clair did not offer us any luncheon ; she had very little to say,—was a complete dowdy, and not at all a pretty woman."

" There, Susan," observed the admiral, " you and I differ. If Mrs. St. Clair were dressed with

a little of Miss Parsons' taste, she would be a *very* pretty woman."

"As it was, however," renewed his wife, "she had on a large shawl, a close cap; her child was crawling on the floor without cap or sash; she was working plain work herself, and gave such a start when I said something about the pleasure we should have in seeing more of her, and I trusted she and Mr. St. Clair would name an early day for dining with us, that, upon my word, some *very* odd notions crossed my mind as to my companion, and I did not press my invitation. I shall write to my niece in Manchester Street, and find out all about them — these St. Clairs! She seemed quite to regard our visit with surprise, and still more so the question of dinner, and muttered something about fear of fatigue, when I know she rode up to the top of Varney Hill the day after her arrival at Melcombe."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, casting an anxious glance around on her offspring; "*we* are in a scrape indeed, if Mrs. St. Clair should prove of dubious character."

"Be not in the least alarmed," said Miss Parsons, who had no wish that the communication

between the Common and Melcombe should be closed: "take my word for it, there is no harm in Mrs. St. Clair. By accident I fell in with Mrs. Macaroon yesterday evening, so I was obliged to stop and have a little talk with her. She tells me that she is as ignorant as a baby, very poor, and that it was a love-match. Sir Charles Maxwell left all his fine fortune to Mr. St. Clair, excluding his own relations, which people do think has an odd look; but, however, there is no disputing it, and it is lucky for these young people, who had not a house to their heads."

"Well, I hope it is as you say," sighed Mrs. Wilson; "but, as a mother, I cannot be too particular. Lucy, Jane, Fanny, Charlotte, Katherine, and Anne, have only their fair fame as their portions. It is a dower, as my poor husband often repeated in the pulpit, more precious than rubies, but more brittle than glass."

Captain Town now ventured to put in a word, by way of his quota to the subject before the house.

"I met Jack Saunders yesterday, admiral; he tells me Mr. Edward is not an indifferent sportsman. He has given directions about drawing the

ponds, in order to fill the stews at the house with fish. He has been out with his gun; has two capital Joe Mantons, Jack tells me; a brace of very tolerable pointers, and a shooting-dress according to the last fashion. But he must be told that fair play is a jewel—live and let live: he has neighbours to be served as well as himself. I shall beat up his quarters to-morrow morning myself; and if you, admiral, did not leave your card for this young man, you had better do so now. Jack Saunders says the woods are swarming with game, and the partridges very plentiful."

"Sir, you are very kind," replied the admiral stiffly; "I have made my call upon Mr. St. Clair. I have a wood of my own, and preserve my own game; I do not wish to encroach on that of others, either for my table or my amusement."

The poor captain, who was supposed to have an odd habit of wandering on his neighbour's property (having none of his own) with his gun and dog, looked rather crest-fallen. An awful silence ensued, which was broken by Mrs. Musgrove inquiring of Miss Parsons if Mrs. Macaroon had mentioned when Mr. St. Clair was likely to return home. Arthur, as the proprietor of an estate, was

now looked upon as an elder brother; and in the neighbourhood of Melcombe, Edward was nothing but *Mr. Edward.*

Miss Parsons professed ignorance.

"Well, young ladies," said the admiral's lady, addressing the widow's daughters,—"Well, young ladies, a fine prize he will be indeed for you. Why, such a lover as he may possibly prove has not been heard of at Chartley this many a day—not since the time of old Moody, who, we all thought, was to have stolen one of Mrs. Wilson's treasures."

"My dear madam, you are too kind," said the simple Mrs. Wilson, looking as grateful as if Mrs. Musgrove was commissioned to find a wife for the owner of Melcombe,—"you are really too kind: when Mr. St. Clair arrives, it will be time to look about us, and who knows then what may happen?"

"Ah, who knows!" replied Mrs. Musgrove, rising; "and remember, young ladies, whichever may have the good fortune to be mistress of that house, you must have luncheon for your visitors."

"To be sure!" exclaimed Miss Parsons; "Mrs. St. Clair will be on a very different footing from

Mrs. Edward, who is as poor as a rat, and could not have raised a bit of cake to save your life. What! are you going, Mrs. Musgrove?—why, I thought we had only just begun our evening. Since you are so obliging, Captain Town, I think I will take your arm to my own gate. Good evening, Mrs. Wilson;—Mrs. Musgrove, I could not think of leaving the room before you."

The above conversation will explain what puzzled the less enlightened understandings of Edward and Ellen as to why, on the following morning, as they were loitering over their breakfast, playing with their child and reading the newspapers, their privacy and meal were interrupted by the wide opening of the door, and the announcement thereat of five Wilsons, two Towns, and one Parsons.

No culprit at the direful sight of the long-dreaded, but oft-eluded officers of justice, penetrating into his place of concealment, looked more aghast than did Edward at this sight; he started from his chair as if to repel the intruders; the child, placed hastily on the floor, began a piteous scream, and the dog, from affectionate sympathy, set up as piteous a howl: Ellen looked what she was—

surprised ; and though it was to her perfectly inexplicable from whence the party came, yet she easily divined that their intentions were neither hostile to their purses nor persons, but only to their time and patience ; or, in plain language, that they came in the charitable form of visitors, to perform the uncharitable part of bores. The company entered *en militaire*, in single file, headed by Mrs. Wilson in a decayed suit of brown black, followed by her daughters in cotton gowns and Dunstable bonnets, treading on each other's heels, to make room for Miss Parsons, who was dressed in every shred and patch of finery she possessed ; floating ribbons of every hue ; falling *blonde*, and lace of every manufacture ; faded flowers and tarnished trinkets ; looking like the Madonna of some favourite shrine in a Catholic church. The two gentlemen brought up the rear ; the one with a straw hat in his hand, the other with a white hat under his arm.

With some difficulty chairs being found for the company, the child appeased by a piece of bread-and-butter, and the dog turned out of the room, Mrs. Wilson opened the parley with an apology for making so early a call. She was not

aware Mrs. St. Clair kept such late hours; but, at the same time, she was very happy to be personally known to so near a neighbour.

Ellen bowed, and was silent. Mrs. Wilson had nothing more to say, and the Miss Wilsons rarely spoke: Miss Parsons therefore opened her fire. Her former experience in humble companionship had made her an adept in the art of complimenting to people's faces by way of conversation; she therefore exclaimed at the beauty of the child who sat pouting at the interruption of its game of romps, and the loss of the dog's company. The blinds being down, she admired the loveliness of the prospect, and, though ruined by damp, the paper of the room; and begged to know if *her* dear old elm-tree was as much in favour with Mrs. St. Clair as herself.

"Many a happy hour have I spent beneath that dear tree," she added with a sigh, "listening to the birds and the bees, with only a book or my own thoughts as my company."

"You are, then, acquainted with this place?" said Ellen, surprised. "Sir Charles Maxwell was of course a friend of yours?"

"No, madam, I had not that honour: Sir

Charles lived but little here. We had no time to cultivate him, nor he us; a misfortune, as regards the present inhabitants, which we will hope may not occur again. I often indulged myself, in the absence of the owner, with wandering through these lovely forsaken shrubberies, familiar to me as though they were my own."

A pause ensued, which was meant to be broken by a polite speech from Ellen, expressing her hope that the habits of the neighbourhood, and of Miss Parsons in particular, would not be interrupted by her presence. But though, through the dictates of a good-natured mind, the words were on her lips, their progress was arrested by the unavoidably accompanying prospect of Miss Parsons' lilac and yellow plume ever mingling with the flowers of the garden,—some remains of her dress sufficiently betraying who it was that haunted the shrubberies and the elm-tree, which were inaccessible from constant picnic parties. Mrs. St. Clair was for once on the safe side of good-nature, and prudently silent.

Captain Town next inquired of Mr. St. Clair if there was any news in the paper?"

"None that I see."

"You shoot, sir?"

"Sometimes."

"Well, you are in the land of game."

"I was not aware of it."

"I can assure you, on that point, from my long experience, the air is sometimes darkened by partridges; and as to pheasants, why, sir, often of an evening you cannot hear yourself for their crowing. Now, at my good friend the admiral's, I killed with my own gun, last December,—a single-barrel,—flint and steel, sir; none of your new-fangled ways for me:—well, sir, as I was saying, I shot, for my own share—let me see—eight pheasants, three hares, two rabbits, one woodcock, two partridges, a pigeon, and a snipe; besides a couple more woodcocks which were disputed,—so I do not count them; let those who fancy borrowed plumes have that honour! Now, if I did this at the admiral's, what might be done here, surrounded as you are by game-preserves? There is my Lord Fontenoy keeps the sharpest look-out that ever was; some people say he goes out himself after the poachers."

"Does Lord Fontenoy reside in this neighbourhood?" inquired Mr. St. Clair.

"His property, or rather her ladyship's, joins yours, or rather your brother's."

"Do they live much in this country?"

"A good deal; but they do not mix much. She is a devilish handsome woman,—quite the beauty of the last race-ball, as my son Tom, there, well knows."

"Indeed, Captain Town," exclaimed Miss Wilson, "Miss Spalding was by far the greatest beauty at the ball!"

"And," screamed Miss Parsons, in the note of a pea-hen, "Lady Something Somebody, whose name I forget, was much more admired;—she that wore diamond roses, mixed with dahlias, on her head, and had mosaics on her neck."

"Come, Tom, stand up for your beauty," said the local militia captain to his son. "If she had not been disposed of before, I am sure we should have had her as Mrs. Tom,—I beg pardon, as Lady Town, by this time; and then, my boy, what shooting we should have had!"

"Rather, what shooting *she* would have had!" replied the youth, raising in the air his long yellow chin covered with long white down, and pulling his shrunk nankeen trousers over his spindle

leg. "The preserves would have been my wife's; which is not precisely the tenure on which *I* would hold property, for any woman's beauty or wealth."

"What! not for Lady Fontenoy?"

"No, sir,—nothing should induce *me*, were she to become a widow to-morrow, to offer her *my* hand;" and Mr. Thomas Town drew his head still nearer the ceiling.

Ellen endeavoured not to laugh; but her eye met that of her husband; his gravity was completely upset, and smiles played on every feature, which unfortunately his wife could not restrain with frowns. Ellen was too well aware that their smiles were duly observed, by the expression of Miss Parsons' black eye, as seen through her veil, and by Mrs. Wilson's pink ones as seen through her spectacles.

It seemed as if such feelings were the signal for departure, if not for war: the six ladies and two gentlemen rose simultaneously; displeasure sat on their various countenances, and Ellen unfortunately made bad worse, by desiring Edward to ring for the carriage.

"There is no necessity, madam,—we walk,"

exclaimed all eight in a chorus. Ellen looked her astonishment at thus ascertaining their near neighbourhood, not having the slightest conception from whence had sprung this inroad of company. Little did she dream that she could never pass her own gate without attracting the benevolent remarks of those upon whom she hoped never to set eyes again!

"A proud minx!" exclaimed Miss Parsons, when, once more safe on her own common, she strutted away as if rivalling the flock of geese who came forth to greet the party on their return from Melcombe. "*She* to look surprised at our walking twenty yards, when she has no horses to drag her own carriage, and would not have a house to her head but by borrowing, nor her brother one to lend but by making up to a man on his death-bed, and so cutting out his natural relations!"

"And the look she gave her husband when I talked of Tom and Lady Fontenoy!" said the captain.

"And the hours she keeps!" groaned Mrs. Wilson;—"eleven of the clock, and the breakfast still upon the table! Mr. Watts should take

notice of such scandalous behaviour in the parish —an example enough to ruin his flock."

"And *he* not asking me to shoot!" continued the captain.

"Nor me to walk in the shrubbery!" said Miss Parsons.

"Nor me to dinner!" uttered Tom.

"But the most extraordinary part of the whole visit was, that they seemed to have not the least idea who *we* were," concluded Miss Parsons as she turned in at her garden gate.

The rest of the party were soon deposited in their respective abodes, to brood over the wrongs of the morning, till evening allowed them to have again vent around the tea-table of Mrs. Wilson, who was "at home" most evenings to the Chartley Common society.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Jones, a gentleman whose yearly increasing fortune was matter of very general observation to every one but those of whose property he had the management, and who might have unravelled the mystery had they chosen to unravel his accounts—of which number was Arthur St. Clair,—on being questioned as to the late visitors at Melcombe, informed Edward of their place of residence, adding,

"Proud beggars, sir! the worst kind of paupers. I am sure, sir, neither you nor your lady need give yourselves no trouble to visit them; for Mrs. Quinine the doctor's wife, nor Mrs. Pepper of the White Hart, nor, in short, none of the gentry of Maltby think of such a thing."

Notwithstanding Mr. Jones's advice, founded on such high authority, Ellen did return the visits from Chartley Common, and, moreover, added an

attention extraordinary, by including the Miss Smiths in her calls; who, never having intruded themselves at Melcombe, were highly pleased at the unlooked-for civility. Not being such rovers as their virgin companions, they were at home when Mrs. St. Clair called; who, strange to tell, sat some time with them and had much to say. They talked not of dress, of visiting, of books, nor yet of the Towns or Wilsons, but of a description of persons with whom the Miss Smiths were well acquainted, and of whom Ellen was desirous to know more — the neighbouring poor.

So far from the Reverend Mr. Watts uplifting his voice against the new-comers, he was their warmest advocate, and it was by his advice that Ellen formed the Miss Smiths' acquaintance; as with them her little plans for instructing the ignorant, and befriending the sick and poor, were sure to be ably seconded, and, if required, judiciously executed. All this was entirely between the Miss Smiths and Ellen: the former knew too well the nature of those who surrounded them, ever to venture beyond the communication recommended in Scripture, — "Yea, yea, — Nay, nay;" most truly having experienced that, as regarded the

Chartley society, "more than these cometh of evil."

But though the early love-tale of the elder Miss Smith, and their secret charities, could be concealed, Ellen's increasing intimacy could not.

"It is pride, inordinate pride," exclaimed Mrs. Watson, one of the Chartley gossips, discussing the subject with Captain Town and Co. "Mrs. St. Clair does not like to be outdone by Miss Parsons in dress, by Mrs. Wilson in manners, nor by Mrs. Musgrove's superior wealth, consequence, and knowledge of the world."

"If they had not invited Mr. Watts twice to dinner, I should not have expected such a civility," said the captain, "considering their means."

"And if Mrs. Macaroon had not told me," said Miss Parsons, "the Miss Smiths drink tea frequently at Melcombe, I should not have expected any of us to be asked! But it is as clear as noon-day, an ignorant parson, and two such dowdies as the Smiths, are all that are to be received there. Well, I wish the St. Clairs joy of their good taste! —what *they* like, *we* shall never miss."

At this moment, Mr. St. Clair's groom was

seen approaching Captain Town's house, where this discourse was held. He deposited a basket of game, with his master's compliments, and departed.

The present was received very coldly. "If he had asked me to shoot it," observed the captain, "I would have thanked him."

"Game is game, however," said Miss Parsons, eyeing the basket with a curious, if not greedy look. "Come, let us see the contents of the hamper; and if you have a mind to be polite, captain, you will ask us to partake of it. I have neither tasted a bit of partridge this year, nor broke bread in your house this six months. Come, come, captain, roast partridge with bread sauce, and hare and currant jelly, are no bad things: I am not sure if I could not send you some jelly of my own making."

"Well, name your day, ladies," answered the captain, looking rather dolorous. "My maid is no great hand at cooking — it will be bachelor's fare."

"Oh! I can lend you my maid," said Mrs. Watson, "and spoons, forks, knives, or anything you may want. Let us see—the game should be

cooked soon, for the weather is terrible for keeping meat."

"Wednesday then should be the day," screamed Miss Parsons; and assuming a jocose air, addressing the company, she continued, "At four o'clock on Wednesday next, Captain Town hopes to have the pleasure of seeing the fair inhabitants of Chartley Common to dine and pass the evening. We shall be the Wilsons, Watsons, and your humble servant."

"Clever creature that you are!" said Mrs. Watson, as soon as the captain's house-door closed upon them; "no one but you, Miss Parsons, could have coaxed a dinner out of the old miser."

"Trust me for that," said Miss Parsons, as she opened her own garden-gate; "I can twist him like an old glove."

"All ways but the way you wish — to the altar," muttered her friend as she pursued her walk towards home.

"Hang the game!" exclaimed the captain, when he had his house to himself: "I could have lived a week on the contents of that basket; and now that prying minx will never be content if I

do not serve up the whole. Hang the woman! she is a thorough pest! Lord a' mercy, we shall be twelve at dinner. I shall be ruined in bread and beer; those Wilson girls drink oceans, by the doctor's advice. The doctor too! if I do not ask him, he will be offended, and he must have wine! Well, Tom likes wine; so he will be pleased for one. We must dine in the parlour, and take the covers off the chairs. No, no, these old ladies need not be treated with such respect. If ever Lady Longacre were to honour me with her company, then indeed I would make a stir; — the pictures should be unpapered, the glass girandoles should see the light, the silver tea-pot be brought forth, and everything used that I have of my best. One gets one's money's-worth from such as her; but these old tabbies — why did I come amongst them? Well, who knows but that old Lady Longacre's jointure may console me? Poor Miss Parsons!—ha! ha! ha!—poor Miss Parsons!"

Chartley Common was all alive the day of the captain's dinner: every one rejoiced who was going, and even the captain was almost consoled for the expense in the *éclat* of the thing. Two of

its inhabitants, however, having nothing to do with the dinner or tea party afterwards, had their own reasons for rejoicing; for whilst the delicacies of the captain's table occupied so great a proportion of the company's palates and eyes, and his wit their ears, the Miss Smiths stole unperceived to Melcombe, to pass the evening with Mrs. St. Clair.

It could not escape the sisters' observation, that since Mrs. St. Clair's attentions to them, those of their neighbours had sensibly diminished; and in their desire for peace at home, and horror of domestic squabbles, they would almost have found it in their hearts to relinquish the society of Mrs. St. Clair—a society which was giving new life to their palsied existence, and fall back on those with whom they had no common bond but that of poverty. Poverty had thrown them together, and must continue the alliance: if variance from envy should arise, it would cloud the whole of their future life, when no longer cheered by the sunshine of Mrs. St. Clair's presence, which they now sought by stealth, carefully avoiding on this particular evening the windows of Captain Town's dining-parlour.

In the quiet study at Melcombe, they were ever at their ease and happy. There they worked, talked, and even laughed; and it was there also that their little history of former days found vent. Mrs. St. Clair the more willingly inclined a patient ear to their tale of woe, from the hope of administering a balm to their sorrows, not by bringing the dead to life—and it was for the dead they mourned—but by finding in Mr. Watts a living being to protect and cheer their still remaining career.

The sisters' tale was a simple one. Their father was an officer in the army, of little fortune: after various home-quarters, his wife and family accompanied him to the West Indies with his regiment. For a short time all was well; the climate did not seem prejudicial; their expenses were moderate—their importance considerable. At once all was over! That awful scourge the yellow fever approached their dwelling: the lover of the eldest girl died the evening of the day they were to have been united; the father and mother were the next victims, leaving their broken-hearted daughters to return to England, deprived of almost all they valued on earth.

Their cup of sorrow was not yet full: on landing, the first tidings which met their ear was the death of their only brother and protector. His little fortune descended to his child; and the sisters, but for a small pension granted by their country, (would that it could be said not grudgingly granted!) must have perished. On this pension they existed for some little time, with the endeavour to cling to the station in which they were born. It was vain; after trying various abodes, all of which proved too expensive for their slender means—for they were slender, spite of all the clamour which is raised against those whose misfortunes oblige them to eat the bread of charity, even though at the hands of their country; a clamour which happily the poor Smiths were ignorant of, from the rare occurrence of a newspaper meeting their eye,—they determined to give up all society but each other, and, with their hope in Heaven, on the uncongenial soil of Chartley Common to vegetate upon earth. Four years had elapsed since their arrival when Mrs. St. Clair became known to them.

To the youthful mind of Ellen, the first idea which presented itself on hearing the praises

which fell from Mr. Watts's lips as to the character of the sisters, was whether friendship or love urged his commendations. When she became known to them, and saw still traces of great beauty in their faded forms, her speculations increased in interest, and laid so strong hold of her mind, that, "herself creating what she saw," she resolved to arrange a little love affair between Jane Smith and the curate. No great exertion was required as to the preliminary steps. Mr. Watts was a widower of fifty; Miss Jane Smith a spinster of a certain age. They had both walked the world's path according to that book which has been so justly termed "the book of life." Domestic losses they had both wept, and had relieved their tears by ministering to the sorrows of others. It seemed highly natural that such a pair should marry; but yet, in truth, without Ellen's aid, so happy a consummation would never have been brought to pass. Miss Jane was too modest to hope, or too humble to encourage; and the poor clergyman himself so scantily provided with the gifts of fortune, excepting a few young motherless olive-branches struggling into life, that he dared not think of adding to his encumbrances. Mr. Watts

and his children were splendidly endowed with learning and virtue; but he had long experienced that "being their own reward" was the only, as well as best, result to be expected from either one or the other; and such rewards, alas! as far as the goods of this world are concerned, contribute little!

In this state of things, Mrs. St. Clair arrived. She saw, understood and accomplished the important affair, but not by herself; her ally was—the Duke of Ashford! A vacant living in his grace's gift a few miles from Melcombe presented itself: Ellen, in a fair flowing hand, in fair flowing terms, and on a sheet of rose-coloured paper, represented Mr. Watts's merits to so much advantage, that by return of post the duke had the pleasure of telling his petitioner, that her request was granted, and Mr. Watts the rector of Linley, with glebe, garden, &c. setting forth a possession ten times the amount of all Mr. Watts's hitherto worldly goods, to which good fortune he was enabled to add that of making Jane Smith his wife.

This change of circumstances in the despised inhabitants of Chartley was not so speedily ac-

complished as related: but it matters not to name the exact moment when the astonished inhabitants of the Common first heard the news. Many rancorous speeches might be recorded, but not many broken hearts; for though, at the moment of the announcement of the marriage, Miss Parsons and the six Miss Wilsons had each resolved in her mind to become Mrs. Watts, yet, as their intentions had only arisen with the Duke of Ashford's generosity, their wounds were easily healed: —would that as much could be said of their envy being equally softened!—Alas! no. But that odious ally of selfishness, in this instance, was of little consequence, particularly as Mr. Watts and his bride being now some miles removed from the Chartley tongues, were happily ignorant of the extent of their venom.

The good fortune of the Wattses had just ceased to be a novelty, when Mr. Arthur St. Clair's arrival at Melcombe drove all other considerations from every one's mind. Great as was the public pleasure professed upon the subject, the private was equal to it,—and that of Mrs. Macaroon, a showy, dressy woman, of thirty-five, the most of all. A fit of the sulks, which had obscured

this lady's countenance from the moment of the *strangers*' arrival, as she termed Edward and Ellen, was now dismissed to make place for smiles of welcome to her master—for there was no knowing the importance she might become to a bachelor unhabituated to the cares of a household!

Arthur St. Clair arrived. The windows shone bright for his reception, fires burned in every room. His brother and sister met him upon the steps; and Mrs. Macaroon, with a cap upon her head, the admiration of Mrs. Quinine, the envy of Miss Parsons, and the invention of the first milliner in Maltby, stood in the hall: a slight tinge of mortification was, however, on her countenance, that he for whom she was adorned had actually reached his own house on foot! The mail-coach having lodged him at the oft-mentioned gate opening upon Chartley Common and the public road, he had walked the short distance to the house.

The brothers were delighted to meet, and at first nothing was thought of but unreserved discourse. The events of four years being, however, well discussed, the present time was to be considered; and Arthur, under his brother's directions, commenced a survey of his possessions. Simple,

unambitious, and unassuming in his own tastes, he was more surprised than elated at their extent, and of his consequent power ; and had it not been for the consideration that his brother would equally benefit with himself, and that Edward judged differently of the merits of farms, woods, game, &c. he would hardly have had patience to make himself acquainted with his domains, or listen to an account of the same from the mouth of Mr. Jones, agent, attorney, land-surveyor, and coal-merchant. An interview with the last-named personage concluded by his receiving instructions to hasten the building of Mrs. St. Clair's projected school-house, to have the garden in better order for her exercise, and more food to be given to the pheasants for his brother's sport.

For fear, however, it should be imagined that Arthur had no thought of self at all in his composition, it must be acknowledged that he meditated a very decided effort of egotism, which Mr. Jones was in due time apprised of; namely, the indulgence of his taste in the improvement of his house. The bad arrangement of the apartments, the hideous view from the principal rooms, the want of a terrace-walk to loiter in of

a summer's evening, and a gallery in which to place the pictures and vases he expected from Italy, were decided faults in the eyes of Arthur St. Clair, and they were faults which he resolved to remedy. With Italy in his mind, and an architect's plan in his hand, in about a fortnight after his arrival he put into activity some score of bricklayers and carpenters, and a most wonderful transformation speedily ensued. A stew-pond was seen *progressing* into a fountain ; a drying-yard into a flower-garden ; three closets, a passage, and a parlour, into a gallery ; and four high casements into handsome French windows opening on a terrace where once had been a swamp.

These alterations were busily canvassed by the Chartley gossips, and of course met with their severe animadversions. Miss Parsons was the depositary of Mrs. Macaroon's injuries in being deprived of three closets which for ages had been sacred to china, mops, and preserves ; Captain Town thought a good fish-pond worth fifty fountains, Mrs. Wilson hated French windows, and Mrs. Watson detested a terrace ! and all agreed that ruin must ensue.

CHAPTER XVII.

Had independence and power, with time, produced forgetfulness? Was the vicinity of Clinton Court to Melcombe a matter of little moment in Arthur St. Clair's eyes, or its fair possessor a being now rarely thought of? Far, far from it! The first brotherly greeting over, Arthur's eager eye rested on the large county map which hung opposite, and in one glance, whilst Edward imagined he was only laying down his hat on the table beneath where it hung, he had ascertained the exact distance which at that moment separated him from Lady Fontenoy. Anxious, most anxious was he to see her—but why? True, he had promised to visit her immediately on his return to England—but what could result from the performance of such a promise? She was now a wife, a mother—perhaps she might have forgotten him and

her once expressed wish. "Still I must see her," thought Arthur; "I must ascertain if independence, the world, flattery, and prosperity, have not performed their usual ravages, by transforming Nature's own child—for such I left you—to the common every-day character of the world, its pomps and vanities; or whether the contagion has to you alone been innoxious."

It was not very many days after his arrival at Melcombe, that Arthur St. Clair mounted his horse and bent his way to Clinton Court. With far less indifference than that question is usually preferred, he inquired at the door if Lady Fontenoy was within.

"Her ladyship is at home," replied the pompous footman to the inquiry. And important as was the manner of the communication of him in the hall, it was not more so than the matter communicated to him at the door. The announcement was hardly made ere Arthur had sprung from his horse, and followed, with beating heart and heightened colour, the wearer of worsted lace, silk stockings, and starched cravat, into a spacious library.

The servant, casting a glance around the apart-

ment, pronounced in a stentorian voice, "Mr. St. Clair," and retired.

At the furthest extremity of the room was a large work-frame, behind which was visible the robe of a female; and a female hand also made itself discernible, busily employed in drawing coloured silks through the canvass.

Arthur sprang forward. "My dear Lady Clara," had just escaped his lips, when,

"Like a hollyhock, grand, majestic, and tall,"

a female form slowly arose from behind the flowered tapestry; and, by degrees, was developed, first the gaudy cap, next the ungainly face, then the scraggy throat, and, lastly, the gaunt figure of Lady Almeria Delaval!

"I beg pardon," said Arthur, with a disappointed air, casting his eyes around for her he had hoped to meet.

"Was it for my brother Lord Fontenoy, or his wife, your visit was designed?" inquired Lady Almeria. "If my brother, he is from home, but Lady Fontenoy was here only ten minutes back—the servant is probably gone in search of her. Will you choose to be seated?" and her ladyship pointed

graciously to a chair, as she reseated herself behind her work-frame. "I fear you have had a cold ride?"

"It is colder to-day than it has been; a fact, however, which in this room it would be difficult to discover—it seems formed for warmth and comfort."

Now, it so happened that Lady Almeria's effort to impose upon the world as to whom the possession of Clinton Court belonged having failed, she had reconciled herself to the misfortune by adopting a very different line of conduct, and was as anxious to deteriorate now, as she had formerly been to exalt the property her brother enjoyed by right of his wife. She had, therefore, no intention of allowing Arthur's compliment to the apartment they were in to remain unheeded or uncontradicted.

"I am glad you approve, but I very much differ from you. Perhaps you are not aware the aspect of this apartment is west, so that you do not see the sun until it is so low as to be a positive inconvenience. There is only one door, so that when once within you are regularly imprisoned; the fire-place is ill-situated, the paper can never be lighted, and the books give a heavy dark

appearance to the room. In short, on consideration, I dare say you will recall your opinion of this room being comfortable. However, it is of a piece with the whole place. The house is large without being convenient; the pleasure-grounds extensive without taste; the nearest post town is nine miles off, and medical assistance equally remote."

"Your ladyship must know best," replied Arthur, rather surprised at his companion's wasting so much breath to trace a fact of so little importance to himself, and which her local interest, he should have imagined, would have prevented her proclaiming, if not discovering.

Lady Almeria continued — "Did you enter by the north lodge? That lodge *I* can venture to praise, for my brother built it. It is precisely one which my great grandfather, the second Lord Fontenoy, built at the seat of our ancestors in Ireland: my brother adopted the same plan with regard to this building. It is all that he has ever done here: a place which is not one's own, one can never be sufficiently scrupulous in not doing too much in.

Arthur looked surprised. "Does Lord Fontenoy only hire this place, then?"

Lady Almeria smiled. "It is *Lady* Fontenoy's."

"That is the same thing as his own;—are not Lord and Lady Fontenoy's interests the same, and that of their children?"

"I do not know, but I should imagine very different: heiresses are usually tenacious of their authority, and my brother is far too dignified to encroach on her ladyship's domains and power. He is perfectly aware that he holds his tenure by courtesy alone."

"Lord Fontenoy's conscience is more scrupulous than that of most husbands," replied St. Clair with a smile, secretly wondering that, with such sensitive feelings, he should inhabit the house at all, get into one of her ladyship's carriages, or shoot her ladyship's game. As, however, the whole county was not Lady Fontenoy's, St. Clair thought he might venture a few words of admiration on the road he had come. But the county was as much in disgrace with Lady Almeria as the Court — and she differed *in toto*, pronouncing the road hideous.

" You must acknowledge, however," said Arthur, " the trees are splendid. The oaks just by the gate into the park are the finest I ever saw."

" Of that there is no question, nor of the consequent inference—the badness of the soil. A deep clay insufferable from wet in winter, and from being burnt in summer, has the redeeming quality, I believe, of being excellent for timber."

The county and place having both failed as topics of discourse, Arthur was secretly determined to make no more efforts at conversation. Lady Almeria, however, now took the part into her own hands.

" You know Lady Fontenoy ?" she demanded.

" I did when Lady Clara Danvers."

" It is some time since you saw her ?"

" Above three years — nearly four."

" You will find her shockingly altered."

" Ah ! I was not aware — Has she been ill ?"

" Yes, she had a very severe illness, which I think gave a shake to her constitution she will not ever recover. Then the birth of her boy assisted the mischief; and few people now reckon

her handsome, excepting some of her old admirers who continue the custom from habit."

"Lord Fontenoy, we hope, amongst the number?"

"Oh, Fontenoy has had no reason to complain—beauty and fortune are rarely combined."

"Complain!" exclaimed Arthur warmly; "if Lady Fontenoy resemble at all Lady Clara Danvers, her beauty and wealth were the least of her merits: deprived of either, or both, she might equally be worshipped for her wit, generosity, and tenderness of heart."

"Very possibly the enthusiasm of youth may have made you or others of your age such *excellent* judges. I do not pretend to dispute your taste, such as it was, or that of others. But Mr. St. Clair, I ought not to forget, you may wish for refreshment. Though rarely in the habit of exercising the duties of hospitality in this house, and little accustomed to issue my orders, yet still I think I might venture on proposing to you a sandwich or a glass of wine."

Arthur declined coldly. Lady Almeria seemed resigned, and a pause ensued, during which she resumed her needle; and that pause was only

broken by the entrance of a servant with the disappointing intelligence that Lady Fontenoy was nowhere to be found within the house. St. Clair had nothing left for it, but to rise and make his parting bow, disappointed in what he had lost, yet happy in relinquishing what he had gained.

Lady Almeria coldly invited him to wait a little longer; a civility Arthur as coldly declined, and, with many apologies for having obtruded so long on her precious time, left the room, thinking, as he traversed the hall, that he had never met a more disagreeable woman than her he had just left, —he really thought Mrs. and Miss Jane Fitz-Norman were infinitely more endurable.

Disappointed in what he had hoped for, Arthur St. Clair turned his horse's head slowly from the door, secretly meditating upon the length of time which should properly intervene before he repeated his visit. Thus thinking, his eyes bent upon the ground, his horse pacing gently, he suddenly heard repeated close to his ear,

> " Ripensando al dolce ben, ch' io lasso,
> Al cammin lungo, ed al mio viver corto,
> Fermo le piante sbigottito e smorto;
> E gl' occhj in terra lagrimando abbasso."

St. Clair started, lifted up his head, and beheld the bright eyes of Lady Fontenoy darting from beneath her large straw hat, as she leant carelessly over a small wicket-gate opening into the pleasure-ground close by the road-side.

"Rather say, *ripensando al dolce ben* that I had lost, than left," said Arthur springing from his horse and advancing to Lady Fontenoy, "was the cause my eyes were bent in sorrow to the ground. But now my grief is at an end; the being whom I desired to see stands before me, and her accents are those of the dear land she first taught me to admire."

"*Viva l'Italia!*" exclaimed Lady Fontenoy as she took St. Clair's proffered hand. "Why, there is more of compliment in the few words you have just uttered, than I ever heard in former days from your lips during weeks; and, if I may be so bold as to say so, more actual words I believe—*Eh, Viva l'Italia!*"

"Whatever I may be, you are unchanged, Lady Fontenoy; the same readiness to laugh at and embarrass your unfortunate friend as ever. Silence in your presence is the safest and wisest course."

"That is the reason, then, I find every one I

now live with so dull," said Lady Fontenoy, laughing: "but we are both unchanged, I see—the schoolmaster is still your *forte*, if the schoolgirl is mine.—But send your horse to the house by your groom; and I will show you there myself, through the pleasure-ground, which even in this sombre season has beauty."

"It is then very appropriate to your house, which struck me as charming."

"It is very comfortable; though I wish that I could have been the first to show it to you, as I fear you have made acquaintance with another of our wonders, of whom I like to do the honours myself—Lady Almeria Delaval! Just before I met you, a servant had informed me that a gentleman was with her, waiting my return home."

"Lady Almeria is a wonder, is she?"

"Is she not? Why, you have seen her, and may judge; and to do her justice, if she has the wish, she has not the power to be insincere; so her character is as easily read in five minutes as five years. You did not find her so surprising, then?"

"Not particularly so."

"Then either you or I are extremely blind," replied Lady Fontenoy, laughing. "If the last, I am in utter ignorance of the follies of the rest of the world—and perhaps happily so; and I am sure, for Lady Almeria not to be a *rara avis* of our species, we must be much more disagreeable than I, or the most morbid cynic of the creation, ever imagined."

"Incorrigible," replied St. Clair, smiling.

"Perfectly so," said his companion, with a saucy toss of her handsome head. "But now, Mr. St. Clair, admire my pleasure-ground, in one good sweeping superlative phrase, *à l'Italienne*, and have done with it, for I am dying to hear all you have to tell. I believe I now address myself to a travelled gentleman, of a certain age, of some fortune, unembarrassed by a wife, or any care, but that which is entailed upon wealth, and unknown to poverty. As an heiress, I ought to commiserate your sorrows: I know rents are not always paid, banks fail, the funds fall, relations are importunate, servants rogues; poachers fond of pheasants, foxes of poultry; that champagne is not always iced to perfection, nor venison roasted to a turn; and, in short, as the Preacher says, 'all

beneath the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit.' "

Laughter was Arthur's only reply to his lively companion. When that was somewhat ceased, he observed, that marriage agreed with her. "As Lady Clara Danvers, you were hardly so gay as Lady Fontenoy."

"Why remind me of my misfortunes? The sight of you made me think I was Lady Clara again: the dream is past; now for the sober realities of life,—for sad and sober too often do they prove. But here we are at the house-door; so—

'On heaven and on thy lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!' "

"'My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
My gentle guide, in following thee,' "

answered St. Clair, as he entered the hall with Lady Fontenoy. Her ladyship desired a servant to carry luncheon into the library.

"Whenever I do not want my guests to run away soon, I always order something to eat. It is some time coming, and some time eating; so I shall have some time to hear all your history."

"And I, some time to hear yours, I trust."

The colour flew to Lady Fontenoy's cheeks, and a cloud passed over her brow. "What have I to tell? My story was nearly ended when we parted—it was soon after quite concluded." And Clara sighed heavily, whilst St. Clair thought a tear stood in her eye. "The curtain fell on the fifth act of the comedy or tragedy when I quitted St. George's church. There is not so much inconsistency as is supposed in the forms of life; in church we are buried, and in church we are married."

In the library, happily, Lady Almeria's work-frame stood vacant. Arthur and Lady Fontenoy were soon deeply engaged in discourse, and by the time the luncheon appeared, his tale had been fully told, to which his companion listened with the deepest interest. As they did justice to the repast, Italy, its arts and fallen state, occupied them till the former was discussed, when Arthur thought he ought to conclude his visit; but still he was loth to depart before the mystery of the dark cloud which had once obscured Lady Fontenoy's brow was explained.

"What would you hear from me?" said Lady Fontenoy, in answer to Arthur's inquiries. "I

married to please myself, obstinately resolved to consider that as best to which my guardian most objected. Since that time I and my lord have lived much in the country, where I meet little society to amuse, and a great deal of poverty to lament and relieve. In London I am a fine lady; I read, ride, and sometimes write,—for thinking much is a great promoter of composition. After all, life is not what I once thought it, or what I expected it would be—the sunshine of *my* days ended with my father."

"My dear Lady Fontenoy, say not so! To be five minutes in your company is to be convinced of the contrary."

"It should do so, but put me not to the proof—do not force me to confess, that if my sun ever shone after I became an orphan, its light was totally extinguished when I became a wife." After a moment's pause, she continued, "I enjoy one advantage, unknown to those who revel in unalloyed prosperity—I dare to look the King of Terrors in the face, and indeed have viewed him with a fearless heart. Death once marked me for his prey; I escaped. My return to life was—God forgive me for the avowal!—with a reluctant step;

for can life have a charm, when no one is interested in one's fate but a poor baby too young to know the blessing of an affectionate mother?"

If, admiring her as he then did, Arthur St. Clair quitted Lady Fontenoy, and England, in the expectation of finding beneath other skies those who would prove equally attractive, he was now undeceived. To a certain extent, Clara had always remained mistress of his heart; but the present conversation decided the fact, and, fully impressed with the feeling that her powers of captivation were greater than those of any woman he had ever met with, or ever could meet with, he left the house as deeply enamoured as man could be; convinced that Clara was unhappy, Lord Fontenoy unworthy of her, and himself—miserable!

This visit was only the prelude to many others, sometimes by himself, sometimes with his brother and sister. The latter was enchanted by Lady Fontenoy, and though very different, yet a decided friendship was soon established between them.

What was Lady Almeria's opinion of the new guests? As a matter of course, Ellen was disliked: she was pretty, young, and a favourite of

Lady Fontenoy's—and Edward, as her husband, shared a portion of her antipathy; but it was only for this proof of bad taste she quarrelled with him. Lady Almeria had a weak point, — we are all vulnerable somewhere,—and hers was a predilection in favour of young and handsome men. (She would hardly have worshipped her brother so much had he been plain.) To them she could be even more than civil: she could be assiduous, attentive, or even complimentary. For obvious reasons, the married, however, were not so favoured as the single; and that Edward met with a civil reception from her ladyship at Clinton Court, and Ellen the semblance of one, arose chiefly from their coming under the auspices of the owner of Melcombe!

Extraordinary as it may appear, though not ignorant of her age, and her glass not unfaithful to her person, Lady Almeria still cherished hopes that her day of romance was yet to come, and every new acquaintance unblessed with a wife she regarded as her probable property, and the possible hero of the love-tale her busy fancy had been concocting ever since she entered her sixteenth year! A coronet was certainly her object,

before even beauty or wealth; but still to the tender solicitations of a good-looking young man of family and fortune, she might sacrifice her predilection for a peer, with her fair hand, and her fortune, consisting of one hundred pounds a year.

On Arthur St. Clair's arrival at Clinton Court, he of course had the honour of being installed in the post of lover elect; and that he did not play the part assigned to him with all the requisite ardour, was laid by Lady Almeria to the charge of the Countess's *arts*, who had a most atrocious trick of wheedling the men away from the girls!—Poor Lady Almeria!

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was on their return from their drive one afternoon that Edward and Ellen St. Clair beheld standing at the house-door a travelling-carriage, and though that of a stranger, bearing the St. Clair crest, and to which carriage four post-horses were attached.

"Whom have we here?" exclaimed Edward.

"It is Mr. William St. Clair," replied a servant; "he asked for you, sir: he is now in the house."

"Oh heavens!" said the terrified Ellen, all her family tenderness in one moment awakened,—"it is bad news from my father, I fear. Good God, what will become of us! Uncle William never would have come here only to pay us a visit. Pray, Edward, fly to him—find out what has happened—I cannot encounter him myself. Are

you sure," turning to the servant, "he asked for Mr. Edward St. Clair?"

"Oh, certain, madam!—I thought he was come to see my master, but he said it was Mr. or Mrs. Edward he wanted."

Edward did not delay hastening to his uncle, having, without all his wife's fears, some little misgiving, as well as curiosity, as to what could have produced such a mark of attention from a quarter whence it was least to be expected.

Mr. William St. Clair was considered in the family as moulded in the precise form of Lord St. Clair — the glass in which, for his own purpose, he fashioned himself; and with whom he obtained more lifts, out of whom he got more dinners, and from whom more mounts, than any other member of the family — besides its being supposed that he was rather in his confidence, and had some influence over his vote.

In a few minutes, however, all was satisfactorily explained as regarded the health of the noble family, and Edward flew to bring his trembling wife into the presence of her uncle; whom, however unworthy of it, she met with the smile

of welcome on her lips, not to be denied to the brother of her father.

Mr. William was a smooth-tongued, dull, cold man, somewhat addicted to prosing; he therefore twaddled on for the space of ten or fifteen minutes upon the subject of roads, dust, and inns, as if he had travelled from London for no other purpose than to make such a communication. An object he had, however, in this visit, of some greater importance; as he at length gave them to understand, by hinting to Ellen, that the communication he was charged to make from Lord St. Clair to Edward could be more properly discussed in her absence. Ellen waited no second intimation of his wishes. A message from her father could, of course, be only one of reconciliation; and with a heart bounding for joy, she arose, and hastening to her own apartment, there remained in anxious expectation of the conclusion and probable result of the interview between her husband and her uncle.

When the door closed on Mrs. St. Clair, Mr. William drew his chair nearer to his nephew, and with an air of solemn importance began a speech which, to own the truth, he had been

framing, emphasis and all, during his two days' journey from the metropolis.

"*My* brother Lord St. Clair, though declining *communication*, yet has ever had in *his* mind your welfare, and more particularly that of *his* daughter *Ellen*. *He deeply laments* the smallness of your *income*, most exceedingly scanty for any one; but, for her, his child, brought up in the *lap* of *luxury* — a poor pittance indeed for life to be sustained *with*. I have heard him repeat over and over again that he knows not how you *live;* that his *heart* bleeds for the privations of his *child*, and when your baby was born, he was as much vexed as man could be at the additional expense it would occasion,—and, in fact, he has often said that it would have been a mercy if God had pleased to *take* it."

"Thank God!" thought Edward, "my darling Ellen is out of the room. I must and I will listen with patience to this atrocious blockhead, but she would expire with horror and dismay at such sentiments being justly or unjustly attributed to her father. I will be silent, and if possible calm."

"*My* brother was a little *annoyed* at your

giving up the law and going into parliament on another interest: and, to own the *truth*, he thought you led rather a *gay* life, considering your means. In the columns of the Morning Post, no St. Clair's name appeared so often as Ellen's—at dinners, operas, and parties, where the cost of her dress alone could not have been suitable to her circumstances. This was no small distress to my brother: but *you* know the *goodness* of his heart, the *kindness* of his feelings; and at that very moment when *most* vexed by your behaviour, he was most anxiously soliciting from Mr. —— a place under government for you;"—Edward raised his eyes with increased attention; —"which he has had the good fortune to obtain, and *I* am desired by *him* to impart to you the agreeable intelligence."

"Agreeable indeed!" exclaimed Edward, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "And pray what may be the nature of the place?"

"With an income of only three hundred a year, the addition of one thousand, I think, you will regard with satisfaction."

"Most assuredly so! But I am surprised that *you*, who are so much in Lord St. Clair's

confidence, should forget that our income is eight hundred a year."

"How so?"

"The five hundred a year that I receive from Lord St. Clair, in addition to my own three hundred: the allowance began shortly after our marriage."

"*My* brother allows *you* five hundred a year!" exclaimed Mr. William: "you are dreaming, Edward! — I am positively certain he allows you no such thing. I have heard him over and over again say, that all you have to live upon is three hundred a year."

"It is very strange," said Edward with an air of surprise, — "very extraordinary indeed! Am I to understand that Lord St. Clair knows nothing of an annual allowance paid into my banker's hands of five hundred pounds?"

"I will not *swear;* — *my* brother has a *noble* heart, — he may in secret have made you the gift, but I have heard both him and my sister-in-law agree constantly with Mrs. Willis and Miss Croak, when they were discussing your unfortunate *marriage*, that they *thought* the most excellent *lesson* for you to *receive* was the being left *unassisted*,

to reap the fruits of your *imprudence* and *undutiful* conduct in poverty and disgrace."

There was a dull hardness of head as well as heart in Mr. William, which rendered him too contemptible an object to arouse ire in the breast of any one endued with common sense or feeling. Edward still, therefore, continued calm, though a smile of derision played round his handsome mouth as the speaker, after having paused to take breath, concluded his discourse with—

"Five hundred a year is a large sum,—a very large sum! People rarely allow the credit of such gifts to remain unclaimed: it is not common for such a sum to be dispensed anonymously."

"Those who are generous from ostentation," said Edward, "of course proclaim their munificence in the highways and market-places, otherwise their object would be baffled; but to those who seek their reward only in their own breast, no further satisfaction is requisite than the good their generosity has produced, and they need no other confidant than their hearts. Heaven knows who the kind friend is that came to my assist-

ance at a moment of great distress; but be it whom it may, of one thing I am well aware,—the delicacy of manner in which such assistance was granted fully equalled the gift itself, and rendered it moreover of four times its actual value."

"Well, for my part I hate mystery," observed Mr. William; "I detest foolish secrets; I abhor out-of-the-way proceedings; I like people to do as others do. It is not the custom to give pensions; it is a bad precedent; it is——"

"Well, well, my good uncle, enough of this. It is very evident that neither Lord nor Lady St. Clair, Mrs. Willis, Miss Croak or yourself, are our benefactors; so there is no occasion to discuss the matter any further. Now, let us turn to the original subject of our discourse—the place offered to my acceptance, and which you tell me my uncle has been good enough to obtain. May I venture to inquire more concerning it?"

"Here are the letters which passed between *my* brother and the minister," replied Mr. William, producing a large packet tied officially with red tape.

"But, my good uncle, these letters will do to peruse at our leisure. Before I wade through

their contents, satisfy my curiosity by informing me what I am to be. What am I to do for my thousand a year? Is it to go as ambassador to the King of the Sandwich Islands?—or to Melville Island, if there be or is to be a king thereof? Or am I appointed one of the new police?—one of the Treasury?—a clerk of the peace—or chief-justice at Botany Bay?—Do, pray, tell me."

"You are very impetuous, Edward; you were always so. Will nothing cure you?—marriage, want, age, or misfortune? I have no intention of not telling you——"

"Your journey here would be otherwise a great waste of time," interrupted Edward.

"Allow *me* to speak, young man, I beg. *My* brother had little conception of the task he imposed upon me, when he desired *me* to communicate the *important* intelligence of which I am the bearer, to a person of so much precipitation, and of such an impatient disposition! It would have been far better for me had he deputed Ernest instead of *me*, as he at first designed. And then again, this five hundred a year; to imagine your having received *it* without imparting the same to *my* brother!—there was a very great

want of respect therein; and I fear that *he* will be much offended thereat. As the head of the family, nothing should be concealed from *him ;* but I will write by *this* night's post and inform him thereof."

"Inform him of all and everything; state what you please; only inform me, I beg, first of all, what you came here to tell."

"I am going to do so,—all in good time,—I am going to do so: now listen. It *appears* by that *correspondence* you now hold in your hand, that Mr. —— was applied to for the place in *question* by no less than *six* different persons, besides *my* brother: Lord Burrow wanted the place for his brother's nephew Mr. Burrow. Sir Justus Loosemore applied for the place himself, having lost everything at play. Lady, Lady—Lady—hang the name!—that old fighting Irishman's sister, who went the Quixotic expedition somewhere against the Burmese or the Japanese, I forget which,—Lady Hawk . . . no—Lady F'alconer, that is the name;—well, she wanted the place for her steward's son, a very clever young man, already provided for in the Excise; but she wanted his present place for her page. Then there was Mr. Crow of Northumberland, who has three

members; Mr. Grasp, who always votes with government; and Mr. Kingsman, who brings in that useful man Mr. Makespeech: now all these were refused, and *my* brother attended to. There 's influence for you! So the moment he heard of the success of *his* application, he desired me to hasten to you with *four* horses: he only gave me time to tell me that I was to congratulate you and Ellen; and Lady St. Clair gave me a message upon the subject of Ellen procuring for her some West India sweetmeats, and, I think, said something about a shawl. I forget whether there was anything else;—yes, there was a third commission certainly. Well, I shall try and remember it before I go away.—And now, boy, for the name of your place."

"Thank you, uncle, I am perfectly aware of it. As you were speaking, my eye fell on yesterday's evening paper, in which is the Gazette, and therein I read—'The King has been pleased to appoint Edward St. Clair, Esq. to be secretary in the Island of ——, vacant by the death of Owen Wilson, Esq.' I have, therefore, no further question to importune you with; and as it is late, you would perhaps like to be shown your apart-

ment. I am anxious to inform Ellen, also, of the cause of your visit. So, if you please, I will ring for candles, as our dinner-hour is very punctually at six."

Mr. William regarded his nephew with surprise. "Why, you do not look half satisfied! What did you expect? to be made governor-general of India?"

"I expected nothing, and am therefore so far uncertain as to whether the proposal be agreeable or not."

"Hem! very grand indeed!" muttered Mr. William as he followed his nephew up stairs; who having established him in the apartment prepared for him, hastened to his wife's dressing-room, where he found her and his brother profoundly speculating as to the business which had brought their uncle to Melcombe.

Mr. William St. Clair did Mr. Arthur St. Clair the honour of being extremely satisfied with the quarters into which his deputation to Mr. Edward St. Clair had brought him. He found his bed-room pleasant; his fare good; his sport excellent, and, strange to say, from liberality or indifference, so completely at the mercy of him

who shot, that Mr. William, not being a man afflicted with an extreme tenderness of conscience, or troubled with scruples as regarded himself, though a martyr to them as regarded the conduct of the rest of the world, generally began his amusement in the pleasure-ground, and, in presents of game, paid up, to his own satisfaction at least, all arrears of civility and charity to decayed cousins, worn-out servants, and old friends, of whatever description they might be. Whilst Mr. William was so employed, very different were the occupations of his nephews.

This secretaryship was a never-failing subject of discussion between the brothers; Edward being as decidedly for acceptation as Arthur for refusal.

"What use am I of in the world," exclaimed the latter after a long argument on the customary topic, "if my own and only brother will not accept from me what he, at the price of danger to himself, wife, and child, does not refuse to be indebted for to a government he despises; and which government will probably see fit to make him a sacrifice whenever they wish for a little temporary popularity, or to save, by the sacri-

fice of any one else, a parasite of their own? Did I ever care for wealth myself? Was not Sir Charles Maxwell's bequest only valuable as a mark of his regard, and as enabling me to place you and yours in independence? My dear Edward, if you have any love for me, refuse, I beg, this odious secretaryship. I would rather a thousand times go there myself, than that you should drag Ellen and your child to such a climate."

"My generous Arthur," replied Edward, "do not urge me to the avoidance of that which it is my duty to perform. I must and ought to accept this place; nor does it follow that, with common care, I or mine are to suffer from the climate. I cannot live the creature of bounty—even of yours, my good, kind brother. This five hundred a year at all events I shall relinquish. On what then am I to exist? What have I besides? Nothing, positively nothing! An embarrassed three hundred a year!"

"You have everything—everything you could desire," answered Arthur. "This house, grounds, estate, — the servants, income — everything is yours. I only wish to reside here as your guest."

"Guest!—and what would Mrs. Arthur say?" said Edward, laughing.

"There is no such person, and never will be."

"God forbid! I am all impatience to see you married. Such determinations can and should mean nothing. Of course, till a man finds a woman to his choice, he is a confirmed bachelor, and every woman cruel till she is asked. I am not going to take the bread from your children's mouths; I am not going to make my children dependent, as long as I live, even on you. All I beg is, that if I die before they are provided for, —if the climate of the West Indies or the West of England cuts short my career, — you will be a protector to them and my wife. I shall trust them entirely to you, and shall die satisfied that they will be quite as well off as if I had lived—perhaps even better; and that your principles, example, and liberality will befriend them more than I could myself have done. Nay, do not answer me, Arthur,—from you no assurances are requisite; and, indeed, I feel the demand I have made to be superfluous,—for whilst Arthur exists, or has a roof to shelter him, and a loaf of bread to eat, the children of Edward will never

want. So now no further entreaties, pray; my mind is made up. Ellen's wavering opinions will be fixed when once informed of my determination: her confinement takes place in six weeks; and that over, we will depart."

The brothers separated;—the elder to his wife's apartment; the younger to mount his horse, which, unguided, took the way to Clinton Court. Whatever difference of opinion might exist at home, there he was certain of being understood and agreed with; and that from Lady Fontenoy he should meet with no contradiction, as she was as earnest as himself to retain the St. Clairs in England, and had even made an unavailing attempt to enlist Ellen on their side—a most fruitless attempt as regarded that pattern of wives.

Ellen was not ignorant of the danger of the climate to which she was going; but others had escaped,—why, therefore, should not they? She was aware that they might live better in England, perhaps, beneath Arthur's roof; but it would be the bread of idleness and dependence,—and Edward's character revolted from such an existence, and Edward must be right. She listened, therefore, to Lady Fontenoy's argu-

ments, but never wavered for a moment in her opinions. There was only one who guided her; and it was well for Ellen that her guide was a man of sense, principle, and judgment, — for, otherwise, his poor little wife, in her unbounded devotion, might have found herself lowered instead of exalted, by over-confidence in her husband and lover.

One little misgiving Ellen had; — a baby she could well manage to carry with her, but her eldest child was delicate. She had already suffered much uneasiness on its account; nor could she well find it in her heart to expose it to at best a relaxing, perhaps an unhealthy climate.

Lady Fontenoy could not resist the temptation, and, though in truth against her own cause, offered to take charge of the child herself. From that moment Ellen had no further distress or uneasiness, and heard Edward's determination with the most perfect content, and satisfied that her Pamela would be well and happy with Lady Fontenoy.

Mr. William St. Clair's halcyon days of abode at Melcombe were drawing to a close. For more than a week he had carried on a most murderous

warfare against all the feathered and furred tribe of game which came within reach of his nephew Edward's gun, and his nephew Arthur's powder and shot; and on each day had disposed of the same nearly according to his desires, and at two o'clock had as regularly returned home to a substantial repast, in the shape of luncheon; to which, with blackened hands, bloody jacket, and soiled shoes, he had done ample justice, his nephews being elsewhere engaged, and his niece partaking the dinner of her child.

On the tenth day of his visit, however, as he entered the house from the slaughter without, to invigorate himself for a renewal of the attack, by means of a certain cold pie and hot sherry within, he heard unusual sounds proceeding from the room he had begun to consider as exclusively his own, and where he was then hastening, when the noise of voices, plates, and laughter, met his ear. He threw open the door, and beheld Ellen and Edward busily and gaily engaged doing the honours of what had been a very excellent luncheon, to — of all people in the world — his sister Miss St. Clair.

Now, Mr. William did not positively hate his

sister; but he was positively afraid of her. She was just the last person he ever wished to meet: to think of her was disagreeable to him, and to remain under the same roof almost impossible. This dreaded female, however, actually sat before him, full five hundred miles from the spot where his fond hopes had placed her; whilst, on the other hand, that place which his equally deluded imagination had intended to be occupied by a delicious venison pasty, was untenanted—save by an unsightly empty dish! The disappointment was agonising: his sister, the bugbear of his dreams, was present! — the pasty — the fondly-treasured hope of his walk — past!

The brother and sister did shake hands, however; and though Miss St. Clair made a terrible grimace at the blackened paw offered to her acceptance, yet she hoped "Mr. William was well, and all the noble family, with whom it was known he had the honour of being in more frequent communication than any other of the race."

Mr. William, somewhat frightened, answered politely and satisfactorily, and, with rather an anxious glance to where the pasty "was not," accepted Ellen's offer of some cold fowl. The fowl

discussed with a bumper of sherry, Mr. William found his nerves sufficiently braced to allow of his venturing to address his sister with a timid inquiry as to what good fortune had blown her so far south.

"Bad fortune — not good fortune — was the cause of the happiness *you* enjoy in having my company," answered Miss St. Clair, somewhat ominously as to the harmony of their future discourse.

"How so, Kate?"

"Why, first I brought a poor girl from Scotland to die at Bath; secondly, I am come to look at these poor children before they die in the West Indies."

"Die! — rather say, live. God bless me, sister! money is the cause of existence, not death. Edward's place is worth a thousand a year!"

"Worth! — it is worth nothing. The island of —— is an abode of pestilence—a grave! But, however, it is no affair of mine; and these foolish creatures say they are content. Well, they are still in love, I suppose; and the same feeling that made them happy in my savage castle will, I suppose, purify the atmosphere of ——. Love, love, love!"

"You are perfectly at liberty, Miss St. Clair, to think what you please as regards the place which *my* brother's kindness has procured for Edward," said Mr. William, drawing himself up with an air of offended dignity; "but I must observe, the expressing *your* sentiments is neither fair by these young people,"—waving his blackened hand towards Edward and Ellen, — "respectful as regards *my* brother, nor loyal as regards the government *we* have the good fortune to *live* under."

"I was ignorant," interrupted Miss St. Clair, "that existence was a temporal, not a heavenly concern; and that we are accounted fortunate to *breathe* beneath the rule of our present governors. I thank you for the information."

Mr. William trembled with rage, but continued his discourse without apparently attending to his sister's remark. "If those most interested are content, what matter the opinions of others? If Edward thinks one thousand three hundred a year a better income than three hundred, why are you to attempt to dissuade him from following his own wishes?"

"Humph! three hundred a year! I thought,

Edward, you had a goose which laid golden eggs to the tune of five hundred a year,—or a benevolent fairy, who conjured that sum every New-year's day into your purse."

"Very true, my dear aunt; some kind unknown friend has been so generous. I had imagined my uncle the benefactor; but as it proves not to be him—and through the munificence of my country I have other means of support open to me, I shall decline in future the favours of any anonymous patron, be he goose or fairy."

"I wish," observed Ellen, "we knew whom to thank for such generous assistance. I cannot bear that our gratitude should be unexpressed for such kindness; that we, perhaps in our ignorance, may look coldly upon, or speak slightingly of, one who has been as a father to us."

"Well," observed Miss St. Clair, "I hope now you remember what I said at first, of the folly of thinking the annuity could come from St. Clair?"

"And why not?" asked Mr. William sharply.

Miss St. Clair deigned no reply, but continued: "If you really wish the mystery to be explained, I believe I could do it."

"You, my dear aunt!"

"Yes, I, myself."

"Oh, it is *yourself* then!"

"Thank you for the compliment, my dear Ellen. Alas! I have not more than twice that sum for my own existence, and am—God forgive me for my unworthiness!—far from being so little selfish as to bestow half of my means on others. But I do know your benefactors, for there are two: it is a joint-stock company."

"Who?—pray tell us!—speak, my good aunt!" exclaimed Ellen and her husband together. Mr. William looked equally curious, without condescending to express as much.

"Well then—to begin my story. It is now about six months ago that, as I was sitting over my solitary fire, I heard a fearful scream which seemed to shake the very walls of my house, accompanied by a tremendous crash at my very gate. To fly with my little household to the spot whence the noise proceeded was the affair of an instant; and there we beheld, completely annihilated, a stage-coach that had been hardly one month in existence. The road was strewed with sufferers: it was a horrid sight—most particularly

as I was partly to blame, according to their account; my direction-post, over which they had driven, having caused the mischief.

"Your direction-post?" exclaimed Edward.

"Yes, child! But do not mistake me: as a guide to my house is not required, from the simple circumstance of no one ever coming to see me, it had been prostrate on the ground, to my certain knowledge, for five years at least, and no one soul the worse; neither I, my neighbours, nor any accidental travellers, till this unfortunate business. Most of the sufferers, however, escaped with a few bruises; and being accommodated at the village inn, soon pursued their journey, with the exception of one more unfortunate person, who, having his leg fractured, was taken to my house, where he remained six weeks before he was able to depart. This individual was a partner in the house of —— ——. Now if any one knew the secret of your benefactor, it must be him; so when he got well enough to converse, I made bold to ask him the question—and under existing circumstances he could hardly decline answering that or any other I might choose to put to him. Well now, who, think you, could be your friends?

But I am not going to weary you with the childish game of guessing. Your old lover, Ellen, Lord Marston, and Edward's old friend Sir William Crawford, are your secret benefactors."

A general cry of astonishment ensued. Mr. William's voice was loudest in the trio—"Most extraordinary!—very odd!—rather officious!—not quite correct!"

"Dear Sir William, how kind!" exclaimed Ellen.

"How very generous of Marston!" pronounced Edward. "I must write by this post to thank him for his kindness, and to explain to him how my affairs now stand."

"And I will write to Sir William myself this very moment," said Ellen.

"*I* must also write," said Mr. William with an air of importance. "I hope and trust *my* brother will regard such interference in the affairs of his family, by two comparative strangers, with an indulgent eye. I will do my utmost to soften the affront: I will pour oil on his wounded feelings. Alas! alas! I fear he will be terribly offended! Sir William had better take care: it is dangerous to arouse the sleeping lion; the ire of

a man in power is a most formidable evil to provoke; and the same influence which has made Edward secretary in the island of ——, may deprive Sir William of his regiment—of his government if he has one—of his pension, or any other military reward he may chance to possess."

"Yes, certainly," exclaimed Miss St. Clair, with a smile, that never on her countenance assuming the aspect of mirth, wore in the present instance that of the utmost bitterness. "Yes, certainly, such may be the case with regard to Sir William Crawford; and as to poor Lord Marston, his head will certainly come to the block for his pains, for his peers must find him guilty of family bribery; a crime, I make no doubt, our laws can make punishable by death.—As to Crawford—God help the man!—he has been guilty of a most infamous deed: he has kept his word to his dying comrade, and has befriended his orphan child!"

"I detest trifling on serious subjects," said Mr. William: "there is nothing to laugh at in the ire of a justly-offended nobleman."

"Nothing indeed," replied Miss St. Clair, resuming her customary severity of aspect: "such

folly is more deserving of compassion than ridicule, and should create tears, not laughter,—lamentation and woe rather than merriment! I stand corrected in having for once been guilty of a smile: it is an error I am rarely accused of falling into; and I trust the next time my mirth is aroused, it will be by a more legitimate cause than the flagrant absurdity of my two brothers!"

The day following this conversation was devoted entirely to shooting by Mr. William; and the next morning, his carriage well filled, both inside and out, with the fruits of his *chasse*, he departed for his own home.

CHAPTER XIX.

"So they are gone *at last!* I thought they would have dawdled on till doomsday, waiting for her ladyship's confinement and recovery," said Mrs. Willis to Miss Croak, as she sipped her tea, and read from the Morning Post that his Majesty's brig Thrush had sailed from Plymouth for the West Indies, having on board Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair and suite.

"I am happy to say, *brother*," said Mr. William, entering the apartment where Lord and Lady St. Clair were at breakfast,—"I am happy to say *they* have sailed. It is a good thing over; we are now assured of their *safety*, and Arthur's folly in *attempting* to detain them in *England* has proved abortive. Simple as his conduct usually has been, yet I must give *Edward* credit for the firmness he has shown, in withstanding the absurd *allurements* his brother held out, to make him resign

an office which the *bounty* of his king granted at *your* request, my *brother*. I hope they may have a good voyage."

"Thank you, William; I dare say they will. I am heartily glad they are gone — it is much better as it is. Now I hope my crazed sister will pester me with no more letters."

"How long is their voyage likely to be?" inquired Lady St. Clair.

The customary time was named by her lord.

"Is the passage rough — are many ships lost?"

"Very few; it is rarely an accident happens."

"And are the goods insured which a ship conveys, if an accident should happen?"

"Insured! my dear, what mean you?" for Lord St. Clair, with all his apathy, did not imagine his better half at this moment thought of aught but her children's welfare. "I do not imagine that what Edward takes out is of sufficient value to make insurance necessary."

"I dare say not; but my shawl which they are to get for me—I am told they are to be had very reasonable in the West Indies—and I should

be very sorry to have it lost. I wrote to Ellen to take care it came as soon as possible. So if the ship is insured in which it comes, and is lost, no great harm would ensue, and I should get my seventy or eighty guineas : I told Ellen not to spend more, for I am become quite stingy since the election. Well, perhaps, if they have a good passage, and she gets my shawl easily, it may arrive in time for Ascot Races. That would be charming indeed ; for we are sure to be asked to Clareford Mount, where all the fine world go."

Very different indeed were Miss St. Clair's feelings, as she laid down the letter from her nephew Arthur, announcing his brother's departure. " Poor children ! God help you, wherever you go ! You are specimens too fair of Nature's loveliest works, both as to persons and mind, to be banished your native land ! And wherefore banished ? — for loving one another — for being little selfish, and for being poor ! Well, I cannot assist you ; but I well feel that England should be more wealthy in beauty and worth before she tosses from her bosom such as you : and if such is my opinion as regards their country, what must I feel as regards my family ? Poor

wretched St. Clairs! wealthy as you may be in gold, not deficient in beauty, but devoured by selfishness, and the victims of folly, your delusion in casting off such as these dear children is too, too pitiable! Well, thank Heaven! Arthur remains; and, thank Heaven! you all shun him as much as he shuns you. He is *my* nephew, not yours—*my* friend, not yours. If it had been otherwise, I, who have nothing in common with the rest of the family, should have been sorely grieved to relinquish his correspondence, and to be necessitated to associate him in idea with all the rest of the crew."

Whilst the feelings of their family were thus variously expressed, the pair who gave occasion to such feelings had no great cause of sorrow, beyond parting with their eldest child and Arthur St. Clair. The love they bore each other threw a charm over every place, and in this instance each had a private source of satisfaction. Ellen was delighted to have an opportunity of showing how exclusively Edward was the object of her devotion, by the readiness with which she abandoned her country, friends, and even child, for him; and Edward was not sorry to be placed in a situation

of some responsibility, which would give him interest and employment as well as bread. Still many a tear chased down the gentle Ellen's cheeks, as again and again she pressed her little Pamela to her lips, ere she entered the boat which was to convey her from her native shore to the ship ; and though the feelings of men are less openly demonstrated, it was not without a very heavy heart that Edward bade Arthur adieu. Arthur himself was, however, a far greater object of commiseration ; for, in addition to the loss of his brother's society, he was hurt that Edward should prefer the idea of independence, gained at the risk of health in a bad climate, to sharing a brother's wealth ; and when he lost sight of the vessel which swiftly bore them from their native land, he felt more firmly persuaded than ever, that Edward was unwise, as regarded his wife and child, and unkind as regarded himself, in not accepting at a brother's hands that which would have enabled them to remain in England in health and comfort.

Her parents having departed, Arthur St. Clair's next object was to convey the little Pamela to Clinton Court ; and at a late hour the same evening they reached Exeter. At Exeter his saddle-

horses met him from Melcombe; and on the following morning, leaving his charge with her attendant to pursue the remainder of the journey in his carriage, he himself took a cross-country road to Clinton Court on horseback.

Clinton Chase, a vast extent of woodland appertaining to Clinton Court, had been for some time his landmark, when, about four o'clock in the afternoon, he found himself safely lodged within its limits. The house was still at a considerable distance, but nevertheless Arthur had the feeling of having performed his journey; and, throwing the rein on his horse's neck, indulged himself in that not unpleasing fit of musing which the shade and stillness of forest scenery usually produces at that period when the day begins to decline, when the shadows lengthen, and the varied notes of the feathered choristers proclaim them sole tenants of the grove. Thus riding, with his horse's tread scarce heard on the elastic turf beneath his hoofs, his vague meditations were suddenly put to flight by the appearance of a living object at the furthest extremity of the avenue through which he was advancing. On nearer approach the object assumed a more

distinct shape, and shortly gave to Arthur's anxious gaze the visible form of a female on horseback.

Horsewoman and Lady Fontenoy were so combined in his mind, that Arthur made no doubt of its being her; which he was the more confirmed in, from the circumstance of the female being unattended by a groom—an attendance to which she was very indifferent. Collecting his reins to advance, he discovered his mistake; the air was not that of Clara, and moreover the female was much taller and rode very ill, and though her horse was going at no pace, it was evidently beyond the control of its rider. This surmise was fully confirmed by a scream which met his ear, and an exclamation of "For God's sake, sir, stop my horse! Pray, pray, pray, assist me!" This request, resulting more from fear than danger, Arthur was not slow to obey. Advancing quickly, he seized the horse's rein; and whether the sudden check threw her from the saddle, or that in her haste to dismount she flung herself from thence, Arthur St. Clair beheld stretched at his feet no other than—Lady Almeria Delaval!

"Good Heavens! Lady Almeria, are you hurt?"

said Arthur, dismounting from his horse, and approaching the prostrate fair.

"No, not much, — only very much alarmed. Oh! Mr. St. Clair, is it to you I am indebted for the preservation of my life? — thank you," taking his proffered arm to assist her to arise, — "thank you! I will sit upon this bank, and compose my shattered nerves, — I have been so terrified! Clara would make me ride that horse: I knew it was one I could not manage, — nor could any one who has the nerves of a *woman*." (St Clair smiled.) "She rode the roan. In Morvern Wood we unfortunately met the hounds, and Lady Fontenoy proposed our joining them. What became of her and my brother, I know not. All I know is, that I was soon left to my fate: the groom even did not follow me; and the horse, darting off at a furious pace, entered the chace. I shudder now at the thoughts of what might have ensued: had I not met you, in all probability the horse would have sprung over that gate," pointing to a ten-barred forest-gate, which the most crazy horse, in its craziest mood, would never have dreamt of attempting.

The horse appears very quiet now," said St. Clair encouragingly. "I dare say he has tired himself with his gallop, and will carry you very quietly home."

"Home!" exclaimed, or rather screamed, Lady Almeria, — "ride him home! — that animal who has so lately endangered my life! I would rather walk ten times the distance than *dream* of such a thing."

"But consider that Clinton Court is three miles off at least.

"Well, I can walk as far, I hope. You will lend me your arm."

Now, with all his philosophy, Arthur St. Clair did not very well relish the proposal of concluding his long ride by a long walk; having to support a woman on one arm, whose society was often, if not always, wearisome to him, and with the other to drag one, if not both of the horses, should his own decline to follow.

"I am afraid," said Arthur, "you will think me a very uncourteous knight, Lady Almeria; but unless my horse will follow me, I must ride him and lead yours. I wish you would mount

Fanny again : she seems very humble, and, I make no doubt, is very penitent on account of her past transgressions."

Lady Almeria was positive, however ; nothing should prevail upon her to take such a step. St. Clair endeavoured to persuade her, but his perseverance only produced hysterics on the part of the lady ; consequently, being obliged to desist, he sat down by her side, waiting till she should become more calm, and pondering upon what was to be done. He had fastened the delinquent Fanny to a tree, and, holding his own horse by the rein, allowed him to browse.

" That is a beautiful horse of yours, Mr. St. Clair," said Lady Almeria, at length raising her eyes from the ground. " Is he quiet ?"

" Perfectly so ; and, after a ride of thirty miles, you might manage him."

" Are you serious ?—do you really mean to offer him to me ? I own that I should like of all things to ride him."

" Remember that he is tired, in some measure ; and a half-tired, stumbling horse, is worse than one who runs away. Still, if you are inclined to ride him, I could easily change the saddle."

Now, had Arthur St. Clair's horse looked as fierce as that on which St. George is ever represented by the village limners, it is probable that Lady Almeria would have been persuaded to mount him for the owner's sake, even in the face of the fiery dragon. But, in this instance, with a creature thoroughly subdued by a long ride over a deep country, and without drawing-bit, her ladyship was steeled against all suggestions on the score of roughness, or anything else that Arthur could advance towards dissuading her from such a proceeding.

Ride him, however, she would,—that she was resolved upon. Arthur must therefore change the saddles, and mount Fanny himself. Glad, at length, to have any prospect of arriving at Clinton Court, he transferred, with no little alacrity, both saddles and bridles; wisely considering that a strong curb was equally necessary in hands like Lady Almeria, for a tired as well as a fresh horse. Whilst performing these operations, he was viewed by the lady with an air of the most perfect unconcern, as she sat on a bank without offering the slightest assistance in an affair chiefly concerning herself.

Nature had not made Lady Almeria totally selfish; she had some share in her handywork; but education, and those with whom she had lived, had done for her as much. She had been taught that exertion was unlady-like, till she was scrupulous on every point in which she could command the services of a servant; but her engrossing egotism arose from that sourness of disposition which takes its source in neglect: from having never been either an object of affection or rarely of attention, she became, even in evident cases of required good-breeding, totally regardless of others; as now, making neither apology to St. Clair, nor offers of assistance, and, when he had accomplished his task, suffering him to put her upon her horse with the air of Queen Bess receiving the attentions of one of her courtiers.

At length, they were on their way. As the air gave her courage, Lady Almeria grew every moment more pleased with her horse,—most particularly when, after a no very gentle application of the whip to its side, she found her pace nowise accelerated — a convincing proof of its natural or accidental docility, or dulness. Lady Almeria, though a coward, loved an adventure; and as

The days of old, the days of knights,
Of tourneys, and of tilts,
When love was baulk'd, and valour stalk'd
On high heroic stilts,

are gone, she was willing to make the best of any small fry of the same shoal which fortune threw in her way—the more showy and less substantial the better. Slender as were her present materials, they were more than often fell to her share, and not to be despised,—most particularly when Arthur St. Clair became the hero of her tale— a tale which she was resolved should lose nothing in its narration. With such feelings she rode proudly upon her borrowed steed up to Clinton Court, her squire by her side, her adventure in her head, and Lord and Lady Fontenoy, whom anxiety had brought to the door, awaiting her arrival with several of the servants, the witnesses of her triumphant entry.

"What has happened?" inquired Lord Fontenoy of his sister.

"Has anything happened?" inquired his wife of Arthur St. Clair.

"Nothing," was the gentleman's laconic reply, at the same moment that the lady answered, "Oh, such a terrible adventure! But for Mr. St. Clair's

admirable presence of mind and gallantry, I must have been killed."

"Killed!—what, did Fanny kick you off, or take a fence with you?"

"She ran with me into Clinton Chase, and was making for one of those tremendous gates at the end of the ride, when Mr. St. Clair came to my aid. I hardly know how he had strength to stop the violent beast; but he did accomplish it, and ——"

"Well, well," interrupted Lord Fontenoy, "all 's well that ends well,—a miss is as good as a mile. I am glad you are safe and sound: come in and change your things.—St. Clair, I am glad to see you: your pretty little niece is arrived, and is at supper with our boy."

Lady Fontenoy now approached Lady Almeria, in reality anxious as to what had happened; but the kind inquiries she was about to proffer were in one moment checked by a glance at her ladyship's countenance. Dire offence was therein written—and all her misdeeds instantly flashing to her mind, from the first offer of Fanny to the last gallop after the hounds in Morvern Wood, she deemed it more prudent to be silent than

excite words as well as looks; and on Lord Fontenoy urging them all to go in and dress, she repaired to her own apartment, from whence she gave orders to the housekeeper to attend Lady Almeria, with such consolations as her nerves or bruises might require in the form of advice, tea, *eau de Cologne*, or cordials.

Lady Almeria was, however, in no humour to be ill; and her nerves being in reality quite restored by the ride home and Arthur St. Clair's discourse, the housekeeper's attentions, as derived from herself, were civilly declined: but when she proceeded to show that it was from Lady Fontenoy she was deputed, and that her ladyship hoped Lady Almeria would order what she liked in her own room, and not think of coming down to dinner unless she felt quite well, the expression of her countenance was instantly changed; she only saw in her sister's politeness a scheme to prevent her following up the brilliant prospects which might ensue from Arthur St. Clair's gallantry of the morning. Tossing her head in the air, and her sallow visage assuming a purple hue, she haughtily desired Lady Fontenoy might be informed she never was better in her life. "Mil-

ler," turning to her maid, "give me the black hat and scarlet plume: I am not in the humour to have my hair dressed to-night—the hat will do very well."

Mrs. Miller was not deceived: she knew that the said hat was what she called "the most dressy and becomingest article of her ladyship's wardrobe:" she knew that Mr. St. Clair had escorted her ladyship home, and that he was the only company in the house; she also knew, judging from her own feelings, that Lady Almeria was well nigh tired of single blessedness; and that though, to be sure, Mr. St. Clair was rather of the youngest for her ladyship, yet he was such a quiet, sleepy, stay-at-home sort of a body, that he was much more likely to choose and be happy with a wife of experience, a steady lady who would let him pore over his book in peace, than with a flighty girl never at rest with her fancies and frolics.

The hat properly placed on her head, and her curls properly arranged beneath it, a substantial robe of black velvet to cover her gaunt and angular form, Lady Almeria descended into the drawing-room. Arthur was already there, conversing with Lord Fontenoy by the fireside; Lady Fon-

tenoy seated near them, deeply interested in the account little Pamela, who sat upon her knee, was giving of "the baby gone beyond sea."

Lady Almeria entered as if she intended to be complimented. Not to thwart her mood, Lady Fontenoy ventured to hope "she was quite recovered from her late alarm." Lady Almeria bowed graciously in reply, and turning towards St. Clair, seemed so evidently to expect some equally polite inquiry from him, that he mechanically echoed Lady Fontenoy's words, and hoped "she had recovered from her late alarm." More, much more than a gracious bow was the return he obtained; and the result of his inquiry was an answer only to be equalled by that of some ultra-grateful, recently-elected member of parliament, on his health being drunk at his own election dinner.

There was much of heartfelt gratitude, deep-seated memory, soul-stirring emotions, and never-failing thankfulness, all brought forth in her ladyship's most energetic style, so that nothing seemed wanting to fill the measure of her benevolent feelings except — reward; when, unfortunately, the groom of the chambers entering to announce dinner, brought her discourse to an abrupt conclusion,

and left to the imagination of her hearers what the climax of her gratitude was to have been worked up into—an offer of her person or of her purse!

Arthur, little aware of the possible good fortune the announcement of dinner had for the present interrupted, gave a hasty kiss to his little niece, and had taken Lady Fontenoy's arm within his even before the servant had concluded his sentence of dinner being ready.

The day following that on which Arthur St. Clair reached Clinton Court, several visitors arrived: the result was, that a certain baronet's lady had the honour of being handed in to dinner by Lord Fontenoy. The baronet himself fell to Lady Fontenoy's share of the good things of the table—and, felicity supreme! Arthur St. Clair to that of Lady Almeria! For ten days did this fortuitous state of things continue, and for ten days did Lady Almeria imagine wonders were working in her favour, by so advantageous a position of affairs at dinner, following up what with more elegance than truth she termed "Mr. St. Clair's gallantry in the field."

But Lady Almeria's triumph was complete, when, the day of the departure of the baronet and family, Arthur St. Clair, who was rather absent, offered his arm as usual to Lady Almeria, and actually sat by her at dinner, leaving Lady Fontenoy to the care of a schoolboy cousin and a neighbouring squire. Lady Almeria with her small green eyes ready to fall from her head by the vibration joy gave to them, sat, for her, a rare picture of felicity. The proposal she thought as good as made; the most secure as well as delicate mode of acceptation was now her only anxiety. She talked, she laughed, she ate, she drank,—she was witty, if not wise; and when she found herself once more in the drawing-room, so pleased was she with her prospects, that though no proposal was yet made, she actually took from her scraggy throat a coral necklace of little value, and placed it around that of the plump little Pamela, telling her, with a very aunt-like kiss, to wear it for her sake.

As some drawback to Lady Almeria's felicity, her chair was not that which Arthur St. Clair sought on entering with the other gentlemen from the dining-room. For a moment or two she was

in anxious expectation. He hesitated ; he took up the newspapers ; he laid them down ; he sauntered towards the fire, and by slow, very slow degrees reached a table, near which Lady Fontenoy was seated. However, it was not by her, but by various annuals with which the table was strewed, that he was attracted. After deliberately turning over their leaves for some time, he seemed suddenly to observe Lady Fontenoy's proximity, and moreover that a vacant place existed by her side : into that place he shortly afterwards sunk, and thus ended Lady Almeria's hopes for the evening.

Did Lady Almeria sleep the less sound? Not at all ; still influenced by the attention of the early part of the evening — she was in a happy state of spirits; and when such was their flow, she had the pleasantest method possible of nursing her darling fancies with more care than ever mother cherished her first-born babe. Visions were no new creations to her: often and often had they had birth before ; had been fostered and improved, till, increased in magnitude and importance, they actually assumed the appearance of reality. Then,

alas! their senseless nature too often betrayed itself, and

> "Sapp'd their strength, and, every part unsound,
> Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round."

In this proneness to cherish dreams, Lady Almeria adopted the persuasion of Arthur St. Clair's admiration; and what was more, by magnifying her danger and his gallantry when her horse broke away with her, she had persuaded Lord Fontenoy to entertain the same idea. The delusion was not to last either as regarded the one or the other for ever; but to Lady Almeria its period of existence was that of the greatest happiness she had ever known; the period of its extinction, that of the greatest misery!

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